

Writing Power in Anglo-Saxon England

TEXTS, HIERARCHIES, ECONOMIES

Catherine A. M. Clarke



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WRITING POWER IN ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND
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WRITING POWER IN
ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND
TEXTS, HIERARCHIES, ECONOMIES

Catherine A. M. Clarke

D. S. BREWER

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For my daughter, Ellen

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Abbreviations

<i>Adelard, VSD</i>	Adelard, <i>Vita Sancti Dunstani</i> , in <i>Memorials of Saint Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury</i> , ed. William Stubbs, Rolls Series 63 (London, 1874)
<i>ASE</i>	<i>Anglo-Saxon England</i>
<i>ASPR</i>	<i>Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records</i>
<i>CASSS</i>	<i>Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture in England</i> . (www.durham.ac.uk/corpus/ , accessed November 2009)
<i>EER</i>	<i>Encomium Emmae Reginae</i> , ed. and trans. A. Campbell (London, 1949), reprinted with a supplementary introduction by Simon Keynes (Cambridge, 1998)
<i>JMEMS</i>	<i>Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies</i>
<i>OED</i>	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
<i>Vita Ædwardi</i>	<i>The Life of King Edward who rests at Westminster, Attributed to a Monk of Saint-Bertin</i> , second edition, ed. and trans. Frank Barlow (Oxford, 1992)
<i>VSD B</i>	<i>Vita Sancti Dunstani</i> , Auctore B, in <i>Memorials of Saint Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury</i> , ed. William Stubbs, Rolls Series 63 (London, 1874)
<i>VSO</i>	<i>Byrhtferth of Ramsey: The Lives of St Oswald and St Ecgbwine</i> , ed. and trans. Michael Lapidge (Oxford, 2009)

Introduction

This study combines close textual analysis, a range of theoretical frameworks and attention to historical and cultural contexts to explore how power is imagined, represented and shaped in later Anglo-Saxon written sources. In particular, it identifies and examines the ways in which late Anglo-Saxon texts present structures of hierarchical or vertical relationship alongside patterns of reciprocity and economies of interaction and obligation between individuals and groups. The sources discussed throughout this book sustain double ways of seeing and understanding power, generating a range of imaginative and ideological possibilities, as well as possible tensions, ambiguities and instances of disguise or euphemism. Close reading also reveals the ways in which the texts themselves initiate complex economies between authors, patrons and audiences, drawing individuals into processes of exchange, reciprocity and mutual dependence which can both mirror and re-model wider networks of social or cultural power and inter-relationship. The five chapters of this book cover a deliberately diverse selection of texts which encompass different languages (Latin and the vernacular), genres, readerships and modes of circulation, illustrating the ways in which different literary forms engage with questions of power in varying ways according to changing formal conventions, available rhetorical strategies and the demands of their historical contexts and agendas. Whilst each text negotiates concepts of power and inter-dependence in specific ways, the fundamental inter-play between hierarchy and economy emerges, in nuanced and shifting forms, across all the late Anglo-Saxon writing examined in this study.

The first two chapters of this book explore patterns of hierarchy and economy in selected Anglo-Saxon literature – the Old English Guthlac poems and the verse epitaphs of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle – identifying the coded ways in which these texts establish and interrogate various forms of power and inter-dependence.¹ As well as direct depictions of inter-relationships between individuals, these texts also treat ideas of hierarchy and economy on more symbolic levels, through the use of metatextual devices and by shaping obligations of response and reciprocity on the

¹ For a more detailed outline of individual chapters and their content, see the final section of this Introduction.

part of the reader. One mode of relationship in which structures of hierarchical power as well as ties of reciprocity and mutual obligation are especially tightly imbricated is that of patronage, and this forms the broad focus of the later section of the book. Whilst the opening two chapters do touch on patronage in metaphorical and abstract forms (notably in the role of Guthlac as a spiritual patron), the latter three chapters investigate texts which portray more traditional versions of patronage, paying particular attention to the convergence of patterns of hierarchy and economy in these representations. The subjects here encompass appeals to absent patrons in tenth- and eleventh-century texts, the relationships between patrons and authors as represented in works written for women, and the commemoration of an historical patron-figure (in the *Libellus Æthelwoldi Episcopi*). According to their own specific historical pressures and agendas, these texts experiment with different vocabularies for articulating relationships of power and obligation, and also generate recurrent tensions and ambiguities. Throughout the book, I endeavour to consider texts within their historical settings and with reference to current scholarship on their provenance, intended audience and potential patronage. Yet my interest centres on systems of representation within these texts, and on the processes of writing and reading which together shape patterns of power. All of these texts pivot around concepts of hierarchy and economy or reciprocity, creating sites in which these ideas can be explored and enacted.

Currently, new work across a range of disciplines is re-focusing scholarly attention on questions of power in later Anglo-Saxon England. From the perspective of Anglo-Saxon social and political history, for example, Stephen Baxter's recent study, *The Earls of Mercia: Lordship and Power in Late Anglo-Saxon England*, has examined how one noble family built and manipulated networks of power in the tenth and eleventh centuries, emphasising the simultaneous importance and validity of both hierarchical, vertical systems of power and authority, and the negotiation of economies or 'circuits' of mutual obligation.² Baxter re-appraises the twin models advanced by different scholarly approaches which portray, on the one hand, 'centralized, institutional expressions of power' characterised by a 'thickly populated and highly motivated hierarchy of royal officials' and, on the other, a picture of 'locally based and socially negotiated power structures' in which 'networks [are] held together by ties of lordship, kinship and community'.³ Baxter aims to reconcile these two images of late Anglo-Saxon England, suggesting the complex interplays of hierarchy and economy in the formation and exercise of power in the period.⁴ Whilst I approach the subject of power in Anglo-Saxon England primarily from a literary perspective, focusing on the ways in which texts shape and promote particular ideals and ideologies, Baxter's work usefully calls attention to a characteristic duality and ambiguity in Anglo-Saxon

² Stephen Baxter, *The Earls of Mercia: Lordship and Power in Late Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 2007). For the concept of 'circuits' of power, see for example p. 203.

³ Baxter, *The Earls of Mercia*, pp. 10–11.

⁴ This approach recalls the influential study of the inter-relationships between centralised and local systems of power in Raymond Van Dam, *Leadership and Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Berkeley, 1985), esp. pp. 7–56.

practices of power – as well as in current scholarly interpretations of power in Anglo-Saxon society.

Alongside models of hierarchical or vertical relationship, the concept of ‘economy’, in the sense of patterns of exchange, mutual obligation and reciprocity between individuals or groups, is central to my reading of power in late Anglo-Saxon literature. These themes obviously intersect with the large body of anthropological research on the gift and gift economy, which has been used, with varying degrees of success, to illuminate Anglo-Saxon social and cultural contexts, as well as Old English literature. The seminal work of Marcel Mauss remains the starting-point for most discussions of the gift, though his vision of the gift economy has been re-visited and modified by numerous later theorists, and its applicability in certain contexts (as well as its presentation of ‘pre-modern’ societies) has been challenged and nuanced.⁵ The Maussian model asserts that the gift economy is a ‘total’ social phenomenon, in which the process of exchange and reciprocity is systemic, extending to every aspect of social and cultural life. Pierre Bourdieu’s later discussion further emphasises the complex dynamics of collusion which support social systems of the gift, identifying ‘the institutionally organized and guaranteed misrecognition which is the basis of gift exchange and, perhaps, of all the symbolic labour intended to transmute, by the sincere fiction of a disinterested exchange, the inevitable, and inevitably interested relations imposed by kinship, neighbourhood, or work, into elective relations of reciprocity’.⁶ The gift economy ties individuals and groups into structures of mutual obligation and ritualised performances of status and hierarchy, and also includes patterns of ‘negative’ giving, such as warfare, vengeance and feud.⁷ There is a long tradition of drawing on gift theory to explore early medieval economies and cultures, though more recent commentators have cautioned that the Maussian model should not become ‘reified’ and should be adapted and nuanced according to different contexts.⁸ It has been suggested that the gift economy might be a particular feature of historical moments where hierarchical power structures are ‘unstable’ or transitional,⁹

⁵ See Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. W.D. Halls (London, 1990). For some significant responses to Mauss’s approach, see C. Levi-Strauss, ‘Introduction à l’oeuvre de Marcel Mauss’, in his *Introduction to Mauss’s collected essays Sociologie et Anthropologie* (Paris, 1950), pp. i–1ii; Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, 1977), esp. ‘Symbolic Capital’, pp. 171–82.

⁶ Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, p. 171.

⁷ See for example Mauss’s discussion of the dual meanings of *gift* in Germanic languages as both ‘gift’ and ‘poison’. Mauss, *The Gift*, pp. 80–81.

⁸ For influential studies which have used the model of the gift to explore early medieval economy and society, see Philip Grierson, ‘Commerce in the Dark Ages’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 9 (1959), 123–40 and G. Duby, *The Early Growth of the European Economy* (Ithaca, 1974), esp. pp. 48–57. L. Hedeaer explores inter-relationships between warfare and gift-giving in ‘The creation of Germanic identity: A European origin-myth’, in *Frontières d’Empire: Nature et Signification des Frontières Romaines*, ed. P. Brun *et al.* (Nemours, 1993), pp. 121–31, as does Barbara Yorke in *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1990), pp. 166–67. For an overview – and evaluation – of the applicability of gift theory to early medieval contexts, see John Moreland, ‘Concepts of the Early Medieval Economy’, in *The Long Eighth Century*, ed. Inge Lyse Hansen and Chris Wickham (Leiden, 2000), pp. 1–34. His caution that Maussian models may become ‘reified’ is at p. 31.

⁹ C.A. Gregory, *Gifts and Commodities* (London, 1982), p. 20.

or that gift exchange may be used as a way of verifying or re-negotiating relative rank or status within a changing social environment.¹⁰

A significant amount of recent work relates the model of gift exchange to Anglo-Saxon literature. Indeed, Mauss himself identifies early medieval northern European cultures as particularly paradigmatic of the gift economy, commenting that Germanic societies 'had a system of exchanges of gifts, given, received, and reciprocated either voluntarily or obligatorily, so clearly defined and well developed, that there are few systems so typical'.¹¹ Most literary scholarship has focused on what Robert Bjork refers to as 'old Germanic culture' or John Niles as 'early Germanic' contexts, generally attempting to recover earlier Anglo-Saxon beliefs, practices and aesthetic systems, and looking particularly to aspects of the secular heroic ethos.¹² For example, Nida Louise Surber-Meyer has applied anthropological theories of gift exchange to Anglo-Saxon contexts, looking at a wide range of sources including wills, law-codes and vernacular poetry, though her study forms more a survey of the available material than a rigorous argument which reveals new insights into the operation of the gift economy or the morphology of Anglo-Saxon texts.¹³ Jos Bazelmans also draws on gift theory in his study *By Weapons Made Worthy: Lords, Retainers, and their Relationship in Beowulf*, moving from a discussion of the concrete objects exchanged within the poem's narrative towards an analysis of patterns of reciprocity and exchange in the formation of social identities and relationships.¹⁴ *Beowulf* is the focal point for many explorations of the gift and gift economy in Anglo-Saxon literature, including Niles's discussion, which argues that 'the concepts of treasure and reciprocity illustrated in Old English literature were not the invention of poets but grew out of the realities of Anglo-Saxon social life'.¹⁵ Niles suggests that *Beowulf* 'brings ... terse historical documents to life by showing us men and women who put their mutual social obligations into practice in accord with the demands of reciprocity'.¹⁶ Bjork's analysis of 'speech as gift' in the poem makes an important contribution by calling attention to how the language and structure of Anglo-Saxon texts themselves can also be understood from the perspective of gift economy and its values of circulation,

¹⁰ Raymond Van Dam argues that, in the late antique world, patronage, based on the exchange of symbolic 'gifts' and favours, 'was important for asserting hierarchies of influence, because by requesting and granting favors men verified their relative standing and influence. Friendships had to be seen to exist, and an exchange of favors was a visible indication of mutual affection.' See his *Families and Friends in Late Roman Cappadocia* (Philadelphia, 2003), p. 135.

¹¹ Mauss, *The Gift*, p. 77.

¹² Robert E. Bjork, 'Speech as Gift in *Beowulf*', *Speculum* 69 (1994), 993–1022, p. 995; John D. Niles, *Beowulf: The Poem and its Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), esp. 'Reciprocity', pp. 213–23, p. 219.

¹³ Nida Louise Surber-Meyer, *Gift and Exchange in the Anglo-Saxon Poetic Corpus: A Contribution Towards the Representation of Wealth* (Geneva, 1994).

¹⁴ Jos Bazelmans, *By Weapons Made Worthy: Lords, Retainers, and their Relationship in Beowulf* (Amsterdam, 1999). He includes a detailed diagram of reciprocal relationships in *Beowulf*, as he interprets them, using a network of circles and arrows to indicate exchanges of weapons, treasure, land, life and support (p. 169).

¹⁵ Niles, *Beowulf: The Poem and its Tradition*, p. 214.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

exchange and reciprocity.¹⁷ His study is valuable as it highlights parallels between gift exchange at the material level, and wider Anglo-Saxon aesthetics, ideology and social and political morphology.

Critical approaches informed by theories of gift economy can present potential problems in terms of the ways in which they frame and even distort their subjects of enquiry. In relation to early medieval contexts, John Moreland comments that

To the extent that the emphasis on gift-exchange has helped undermine the Sameness and universality of 'market exchange', and to erode belief in the Otherness of early medieval economic autarky, it has been valuable. However, in its emphasis on elite exchange and consumption as the driving forces in structuring and transforming society, it has simply perpetuated another, but equally stereotypical image of the early middle ages as a world of 'mead halls' and 'ring-givers'. This conception is in fact a mirror in which the other great images of the period – warfare and heroes – are reflected.¹⁸

Whilst the present study inevitably still centres on 'elite' concerns and ideologies as represented in written texts, it will focus on the historical setting of late Anglo-Saxon England and on social, political and cultural contexts far removed from the heroic world of the mead-hall as imagined in texts such as *Beowulf*. But it will attend closely to the ways in which models of economy and reciprocity continue to be significant in texts composed and copied in this period, serving to shape relationships, construct communities and promote ideologies of power. The rituals of gift exchange depicted in *Beowulf* belong to an archaic or semi-fictive world remote from the changing administrative, economic and social setting of late Anglo-Saxon England: instead, in the tenth and eleventh centuries, we see the rise of towns and markets, the well-established use of coinage and what James Campbell describes as the 'strongly capitalised' countryside.¹⁹ Yet, the currency of these heroic images and narratives in the tenth and eleventh centuries could be seen as providing a symbolic language for articulating and exploring patterns of power and obligation which, in differing ways, continue to be relevant or meaningful. In her study *Horace and the Gift Economy of Patronage*, Phebe Lowell Bowditch has explored a similar phenomenon in relation to the literature and politics of Augustan Rome, in which 'former social stages, whether mythical or historical, could provide a way of conceptualizing the obligations and expectations entailed in patronage' and other social ties.²⁰ Beyond the late Anglo-Saxon literature which deals with traditional 'heroic' contexts, patterns of reciprocity are present in a wide range of sources in more subtle and nuanced ways, as symbolic

¹⁷ Bjork, 'Speech as Gift'. For other studies of *Beowulf* which draw on models of gift economy, see for example Charles Donahue, 'Potlatch and Charity: Notes on the Heroic in *Beowulf*', in *Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Essays in Appreciation for John C. McGalliard*, ed. Lewis Nicholson and Dolores Warwick Frese (Notre Dame, 1975), pp. 23–40; John M. Hill, 'Beowulf and the Danish Succession: Gift-Giving as an Occasion for Complex Gesture', *Medievalia et Humanistica* 11 (1982), 177–97; Michael J. Enright, 'Lady with a Mead-Cup: Ritual, Group Cohesion and Hierarchy in the Germanic Warband', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 22 (1988), 170–203.

¹⁸ Moreland, 'Concepts of the Early Medieval Economy', p. 21.

¹⁹ James Campbell, *The Anglo-Saxon State* (London, 2000), p. 17.

²⁰ Phebe Lowell Bowditch, *Horace and the Gift Economy of Patronage* (Berkeley, 2001), p. 8.

systems for understanding social ties and obligations and as aesthetic and morphological principles which underpin the forms of texts themselves. Consistently, these systems of economy can be seen to work alongside or in conjunction with structures of vertical power and hierarchy.

As already noted, the convergence of patterns of hierarchical power as well as reciprocity and economy can perhaps be seen most strikingly within relationships of patronage. Whilst the concept of patronage is already present in symbolic and metaphorical modes in the first chapters of this book, the later chapters move on to discuss relationships and systems which can be characterised in more traditional terms as those associated with patronage. 'Patronage' is a notably slippery term, difficult to fix and define, and which is currently investigated according to a variety of differing theoretical models and assumptions.²¹ Debates continue regarding the use of patronage as a tool of comparative analysis, and especially whether it should be considered a 'universal' phenomenon or a specific feature of 'transitional' societies.²² This notion of a 'transitional' context is characterised by Ernest Gellner as 'the incompletely centralised state, the defective market, or the defective bureaucracy', ideas which, whilst presented in problematic terms of deficiency or difference from 'complete' modernity, do resonate with the historical setting of later Anglo-Saxon England, its changing systems of administration and government and movement towards more centralised authority. Patronage can also be approached as either a specific social relationship involving individuals, or as a system which extends throughout society in 'intersecting threads', 'chains' or 'cell structures'.²³ This concept of inter-related, overlapping networks of patronage and power, spreading out from the local or individual level, is again suggestive of current research into late Anglo-Saxon contexts.

The readings in the later chapters of this book of Anglo-Saxon representations of patronage are not constrained by the rigid formulations of 'patron-client relations' advanced by some studies. Indeed, many models of patronage derive from subjects of enquiry (such as the ancient world, or the Mediterranean region) which do not map satisfactorily onto the context of late Anglo-Saxon England. However, there is general scholarly agreement on three essential aspects of patronage which seem largely to

²¹ John Waterbury comments that 'one cannot advance irrefutable, generally accepted criteria by which to establish what patronage is'. John Waterbury, 'An attempt to put patrons and clients in their place', in *Patrons and Clients in Mediterranean Societies*, ed. Ernest Gellner and John Waterbury (London, 1977), pp. 329–42, p. 329. Alex Weingrod also suggests that patronage is 'a "freighted" concept ... carrying varied meanings and open to diverse understandings'. Alex Weingrod, 'Patronage and Power', in *Patrons and Clients in Mediterranean Societies*, ed. Gellner and Waterbury, pp. 41–52, p. 41.

²² See Terry Johnson and Chris Dandeker, 'Patronage: relation and system', in *Patronage in Ancient Society*, ed. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (London, 1989), pp. 219–38, pp. 219–20.

²³ For the expression 'intersecting threads', see Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society*, trans. L.A. Manyon, 2 vols (London, 1965), vol. 1, *The Growth of Ties of Dependence*, p. 148; for 'chains' and 'cell structures' see Johnson and Dandeker, 'Patronage: relation and system', pp. 220, 223. For the movement in scholarship towards considering patronage as a social system, see S.N. Eisenstadt and L. Roniger, 'Patron-client relations as a model of structuring social exchange', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22 (1980), 42–77, pp. 42–47.

span historical and cultural contexts, and these core elements are integral to my readings of power and inter-dependence as represented in the Anglo-Saxon texts. First, patronage can be understood as a relationship of inequality or asymmetry, in which the individuals involved are placed at differential points within a social hierarchy or vertical power structure.²⁴ Secondly, patronage involves some form of personal relationship, variously defined in terms of intimacy, voluntarism or friendship. Even where relationships are less immediate or direct, as in the case of links between individuals widely spaced within a 'chain' of inter-connection, the conditions which support the function or ideology of patronage can still be seen as antithetical to the 'anonymous' social structures of 'mass society'.²⁵ Thirdly, patronage relies upon the dynamic of exchange, drawing individuals into economies of mutual obligation and reciprocity. In the context of this study, my interest gathers around the inter-plays and tensions between patterns of hierarchy and reciprocity within patronage relationships, emphasising the constant presence of ambiguity, euphemism or disguise in their representation. The characteristic ambivalence of patron-client relations is touched upon in many discussions of patronage, including work by Eisenstadt and Roniger which specifically identifies the 'paradoxical' nature of the different elements involved in patronage and the 'contradictions' which the traditional model sets up.²⁶ In patronage relationships, models of hierarchy and economy converge and collide in the most acute and challenging ways. The discussion of depictions of patronage in the last three chapters of this book brings into sharp focus the paradoxes and dualities inherent in Anglo-Saxon representations of power more widely.

The chapters within this book are designed as discrete case studies which can each stand alone, exploring specific sources across a range of differing genres and the inter-play of models of hierarchy and economy in different contexts. However, across the volume as a whole, these individual investigations contribute, in varying and not always unanimous ways, to a broader picture of the dynamics of power as explored and negotiated in late Anglo-Saxon texts.²⁷ Chapter One, 'Order and Interlace: the

²⁴ For various definitions of patronage, across a range of historical contexts, which emphasise these three key elements see Johnson and Dandeker, 'Patronage: relation and system', p. 220; J.M. Bourne, *Patronage and Society in Nineteenth-Century England* (London, 1986), pp. 4–9; Eisenstadt and Roniger, 'Patron-client relations', pp. 48–50.

²⁵ See Ernest Gellner, 'Patrons and clients', in *Patrons and Clients in Mediterranean Societies*, ed. Ernest Gellner and John Waterbury (London, 1977), pp. 1–6, p. 6.

²⁶ Eisenstadt and Roniger, 'Patron-client relations', pp. 50 and 51; see also S.N. Eisenstadt and L. Roniger, *Patrons, Clients and Friends: Interpersonal Relations and the Structure of Trust in Society* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 15.

²⁷ Gerald Bond has offered a fitting analogy for the structure and rationale of a book which deals with a wide range of sources, dealing with difficult juxtapositions whilst endeavouring to avoid artificial synthesis of the material or the imposition of levelling readings across texts. In his study *The Loving Subject: Desire, Eloquence, and Power in Romanesque France* (Philadelphia, 1995), he suggests that 'the chapters of this book resemble more the "data points" than the "graph" eventually drawn around them. Pushing the analogy further, I think of the subject as the "field" upon which I "plot" the points, the signifying space within which I locate my analyses. With such a structure I hope to reduce the distortion of my own guiding thesis on the one hand, and to increase the presence of the past on the other' (p. 16).

Guthlac Poems of the Exeter Book', begins with the model of one individual – St Guthlac – in order to explore networks of inter-relationship, power and patronage (in a metaphorical, spiritual sense) as represented in these Old English texts. *Guthlac A* and *B* show an acute interest in issues of both hierarchy and economy, locating Guthlac within a strict, vertical order of spiritual seniority and power, yet also employing specific rhetorical systems such as the language of friendship, kinship and affectivity, which apparently collapse and transcend hierarchical distance. Throughout the poems, the element *lac* within the saint's own name also generates reflections upon concepts of exchange and reciprocity. Suggested by close reading of the Old English texts, this chapter also considers the Anglo-Saxon idiom of interlace as a visual metaphor which captures the paradoxes and ambiguities inherent in these representations of inter-relationship and inter-dependence. The aesthetics and structural principles of interlace simultaneously sustain a fixed, rigid geometrical order alongside apparent fluidity and the free inter-connection of spatially remote points. The double way of seeing suggested by Anglo-Saxon interlace thus offers another way of conceptualising the tensions and ambivalences generated by the interplay of hierarchy and economy in Anglo-Saxon texts.

Chapter Two, 'Sites of Economy: Power and Reckoning in the Poetic Epitaphs of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle', explores the tradition of epitaphic writing in Anglo-Saxon England (as well as its European background) in order to suggest new readings of poetic passages on the deaths of rulers in the late Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. Moving away from a general categorisation of these passages as 'panegyric' or 'laudatory' (along with the attendant problems or anomalies this initiates), close attention to the specific features and dynamics of the epitaph genre enables acknowledgement of their more critical elements and an exploration of their central preoccupation with concepts of economy and exchange. Located in the textual 'her' of the chronicle rather than the traditional 'hic' of the tomb, the poetic epitaphs of the late Anglo-Saxon Chronicle form sites of reckoning and reciprocity, where readers are asked to scrutinise, evaluate and memorialise their commemorated subjects. In this process, vertical structures of power can be understood, simultaneously, in a number of different and even inverse ways. The economies set up between texts, their subjects, authors and audiences gather further complexity through the particular dynamics of reflecting upon the body of a deceased king, with its additional implications for the corporate body of the nation and the self-identification of the reader as a member of an English community.

Chapter Three examines a wide range of texts in order to explore issues of absent or remote patronage in the tenth and early eleventh centuries. "Absens ero ... presens ero": Writing the Absent Patron' reads texts in the context of changing administrative structures, new ties of patronage and intensifying cultural connections between England and the continent, all of which contribute to situations in which patrons are physically distant or remote. The chapter analyses a range of textual strategies which seek to emphasise the continuing, effective power of the patron despite his physical absence, writing individuals and communities into still-vital, powerful economies of mutual obligation and reciprocity. The discussion deliberately looks at a wide range of material (including prose hagiography and panegyric verse)

in order to explore how these representational strategies are nuanced according to genre and according to the specific agendas (including their own appeals to patrons) which motivate each text. Whilst the hagiographic material makes use of affective language, epistolary conventions and the representation of demonstrative behaviour, the poetic sources examined here draw on more symbolic systems and extended metaphors in order to represent the power of the absent patron. The poetry of Abbo of Fleury plays with imagery of light and reflection on a number of levels, suggesting the potential of the patron's power and virtue to collapse physical distance, as well as the capacity of textual form (especially the acrostic) to initiate complex economies between patrons and clients, authors and addressees, textual gifts and their recipients, manuscripts and readers.

Chapter Four turns to representations of the relationships between authors and patrons (whether real or imagined) in a selection of late tenth- and eleventh-century texts. Concentrating on the concept of 'Power and Performance', it examines how literary patronage is explored in these sources through the textual performance of a range of personae and a wide repertoire of roles, which allow the dynamics of collaboration, inter-dependence and hierarchy between author and patron to be figured in shifting, fluid and often ambivalent ways. The chapter focuses on texts which foreground issues of gender and gender roles, extending to their explorations of authorship and patronage and the metaphorical vocabulary which they employ to interrogate these concepts. Scholarship on Cynewulf's *Elene* demonstrates the ways in which a range of gendered roles can be performed by individual protagonists within a text, in order to suggest differing forms of power, agency and inter-relationship. The *Encomium Emmae Reginae* and *Vita Ædwardi Regis* suggest how this attention to gendered personae can become even more acute in texts written for female patrons. Across these texts, a range of paired or relational gendered roles – including handmaid and God, lady and desiring servant, teacher and pupil, mother and son, Muse and poet – suggest the multi-layered and shifting interactions between authors and patrons, whilst resisting any neat, definitive attribution of hierarchy and status.

The final chapter, 'Remembering Anglo-Saxon Patronage: the *Libellus Æthelwoldi Episcopi* and its Contexts', looks beyond the conventional span of Anglo-Saxon England to examine this twelfth-century text which claims to compile and translate a range of tenth-century Old English charters attesting the lands acquired for Ely by Æthelwold during the period of the tenth-century Benedictine Reform and the re-foundation of the abbey. The text presents interpretative challenges but also valuable opportunities for investigating formulations of power, as well as the additional factors of memory and the use of the past. Crucially, it has not received proper attention from a literary perspective, leading to neglect of its particular dynamics and formal features as a prosimetrical text. First, the *Libellus* must be understood in relation to two different historical contexts: the period of the Benedictine Reform, which it records, as well as the creation of the new bishopric of Ely in the twelfth century and the work of Bishop Hervey in asserting and extending its rights. The representation in the *Libellus* of Æthelwold as a powerful, charismatic patron who overcomes opposition and challenges to his desired expansion of Ely provides a legitimising, authorising mirror for Hervey and his strategies in the twelfth century. Yet the text

also presents problems: whilst it attempts to export conflict to the Anglo-Saxon past, its repeated accounts of land disputes, legal challenges and negotiations resonate all too closely with Hervey's present. Most interestingly of all, the prosimetrical form of the text presents a dual image of Æthelwold as patron, portraying him in the prose as a master tactician and opportunist who engages in the negotiations and transactions of local lay society, and in the embedded verse as an elevated, saintly figure who transcends the grubby politics of land acquisition. Once again, we discover an image of power in which concepts of hierarchy and economy are deeply intertwined and sometimes in tension.

The book concludes with a short Afterword which reflects on some of the themes and issues which have emerged across the chapters – as well as areas of difficulty and questions beyond the scope of the current study. It also suggests some possible directions for further enquiry and ways in which this research might intersect with that currently ongoing in other disciplines.

Order and Interlace: the Guthlac Poems of the Exeter Book

The two Guthlac poems of the Exeter Book form differing verse explorations of aspects of the life of the eponymous late seventh- to early eighth-century ascetic saint who settled in the East Anglian fenland, with associated homiletic material.¹ Throughout the texts there is a prominent interest in spiritual patronage, and in the structures of relationship, authority and dependency between individuals within a spiritual community. The particular relationships presented within these poems – such as those between Guthlac and his patron saint Bartholomew (especially in *Guthlac A*), or between Guthlac and his disciple Beccel (*Guthlac B*) – are crucial elements within the texts' strategy of moving between the specific and the universal, using elements from the life of Guthlac to offer models of Christian virtue and relationship for contemplation and imitation.² The Guthlac poems show an acute interest in hierarchy and rank, through which power and authority are ordered, but also in economies of inter-dependence and reciprocity. Whilst spiritual relationships are located within a strictly hierarchical system, the use of specific discourses of friendship, kinship and affectivity allows the apparent transcendence of strict hierarchy and enables individuals to enjoy privileged, intimate affiliations which seem to collapse hierarchical distance. This chapter will explore the inter-play of these conceptual and rhetorical idioms within the Guthlac poems, examining the texts' representational and linguistic strategies, their possible functions within their historical and cultural contexts, and the elements of tension or euphemism inherent in their depictions of power.

¹ Quotations from *Guthlac A* and *B* are taken from the edition by Bernard Muir in *The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry*, ed. Bernard J. Muir (Exeter, 1994), vol. 1, pp. 111–59, with additional use of the critical apparatus in *The Guthlac Poems of the Exeter Book*, ed. Jane Roberts (Oxford, 1979). Line numbers will run continuously across the two Guthlac poems, beginning with line 1 at the start of *Guthlac A* and line 819 at the start of *Guthlac B*.

² Daniel Calder comments, for example, that 'the Old English poet's strategy [in *Guthlac B*] meticulously draws out the full thematic implications latent in the saint's history and universalizes our perception of Guthlac'. Daniel G. Calder, 'Theme and Strategy in *Guthlac B*', *Papers on Language and Literature* 8 (1972), 227–42.

In addition to close analysis of the Guthlac poems themselves, and consideration of their possible place within tenth-century cultural contexts, this chapter will explore the Anglo-Saxon aesthetic of 'interlace' and its potential value as a metaphor for understanding ideologies of patronage and power. This imaginative leap from the textual to the visual enables us to think in fresh and productive ways about patterns of inter-relationship as represented in the Guthlac poems, together with their inherent ambivalences and paradoxes.³ More than merely a decorative convention, interlace has long been recognised by scholars as a fundamental structural principle in Anglo-Saxon visual and textual art, suggesting its likely significance as an interpretative tool or conceptual idiom in the period.⁴ Fred Orton has reminded us that artistic 'style' is inextricably connected with 'ideology', offering an insight into the values, practices and cognitive processes of the culture which produces it.⁵ The visual designs, and structural processes, of Anglo-Saxon interlace are strongly suggestive of the interplays between hierarchy and economy found within the Guthlac poems, in which individuals are simultaneously separated by rigid hierarchical order and brought together by more fluid discourses of affectivity and friendship. In a visual analogy, the inter-connecting bonds of interlace design seem to transcend physical space and separation by drawing together disparate points across a spatial plan into one integrated, whole knotwork design. Impressive examples include the carpet-pages of the Lindisfarne Gospels, the Sutton Hoo belt buckle and shoulder clasps, and the wonderful metalwork recently discovered in the 'Staffordshire Hoard' of Anglo-Saxon gold. Whilst the flowing strands and braids of interlace appear to move freely across space, these designs, as I shall discuss later in the chapter, are 'controlled with geometric precision' and are based on a rigid, strictly-ordered system of grids and points plotted in fixed positions.⁶ Thus, the visual and spatial metaphor of Anglo-Saxon interlace captures the central ambivalences or paradoxes inherent in representations of power and inter-relationship in the Guthlac poems, and beyond. The double way of seeing suggested by interlace patterning underpins my approach to the Guthlac poems throughout this chapter, but I will move towards a fuller exploration and analysis of this parallel at the end of the discussion.

³ On the subject of interlace design as found in Anglo-Saxon visual art and literature, Clare Lees has commented that 'it is not immediately obvious what to do with a cultural system of parallels and resemblances across artefacts other than identify them'. She suggests that, in many cases, investigations of interlace have proceeded 'along parallel paths that are not destined to converge: art historians will analyse visual interlace, literary critics verbal interlace'. Clare A. Lees, 'Basil Bunting, *Brigflatts*, Lindisfarne, and Anglo-Saxon Interlace', in *Anglo-Saxon Culture and the Modern Imagination*, ed. David Clark and Nicholas Perkins (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 111–27, p. 118. In her essay, Lees attempts to find meaningful pathways between the visual and verbal, as I do in this chapter.

⁴ See for example John Leyerle, 'The Interlace Structure of *Beowulf*', *University of Toronto Quarterly* 37 (1967), 1–17; Adeline Courtney Barrett, *The Larger Rhetorical Patterns in Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (New York, 1966); Pauline E. Head, *Representation and Design: Tracing a Hermeneutics of Old English Poetry* (New York, 1997); and further critical background and discussion below, pp. 39–41.

⁵ Fred Orton, 'Northumbrian Identity in the Eighth Century: The Ruthwell and Bewcastle Monuments; Style, Classification, Class and the Form of Ideology', *JMEMS* 34 (2004), 95–146.

⁶ John Leyerle, 'The Interlace Structure of *Beowulf*', p. 148. The use of grids and points is particularly evident in manuscript art (see discussion below, p. 41).

Our modern English word *interlace* also resonates with the multivalent element *lac* in Guthlac's own name, the semantic range of which includes 'gift', 'offering', 'sacrifice', 'reward', 'exchange' and 'play'.⁷ The metaphorical possibilities of *lac* have been recognised and explored by both medieval and modern commentators. Felix's eighth-century Latin *Vita* of Guthlac observes that, through an analysis of the name in English, it is:

...ex duobus integris constare videtur, hoc est 'Guth' et 'lac', quod Romani sermonis nitore personat 'belli munus', quia ille cum vitiis bellando munera aeternae beatitudinis...

...shown to consist of two individual words, namely 'Guth' and 'lac', which in the elegant Latin tongue is 'belli munus' (the reward of war), because by warring against vices he was to receive the reward of eternal bliss...⁸

This interpretation of Guthlac's name, and the associated idea of the saint as *miles Cristi*, is also evident in the Guthlac poems of the Exeter Book, where he is referred to as 'godes cempa' ('God's warrior', *Guthlac B*, line 889a). Yet, as several scholars have noted, the Guthlac poems self-consciously exploit, develop and extend the semantic range of *lac*, using it figuratively to form a basis for the spiritual economies of saintly virtue and reward.⁹ Throughout the poems, the Old English term *lac* is exploited linguistically and thematically to underpin metaphorical systems of spiritual exchange, sacrifice and reciprocity. The Old English *lac* (or the verb *lacan*) also generates a range of semantic associations which suggest the forms and principles of Anglo-Saxon textual art. Exeter Book riddle 31, for example, uses the phrase 'wordum *lacan*' ('to play with words' or possibly 'to exchange words', my emphasis) to describe the processes of linguistic interlacing characteristic of Old English poetic composition, suggesting the importance of models of symmetry and economy within the formation of texts themselves.¹⁰ The prominent concept of *lac* again calls attention to the significance of patterns of exchange and reciprocity within the Guthlac poems and their depiction of spiritual relationships.

The Exeter Book Guthlac poems are now generally agreed to be two distinct texts with different sources and authorship, placing emphasis on different aspects of the saint's life. *Guthlac B* uses Felix's Latin *Vita* as principal source, drawing on Chapter 50, which gives the account of Guthlac's death, as well as other episodes and themes from the text.¹¹ *Guthlac A*, on the other hand, appears not to use Felix directly and

⁷ This is not a direct etymological connection: the *OED* derives Modern English *lace* from Old French *laz* or *las*, with first usage in the fourteenth century (and the verb *entrelace* also occurring in the fourteenth century with its first citation in Chaucer). Yet *lace* and *lac* form a striking visual pun.

⁸ *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac*, ed. Bertram Colgrave (Oxford, 1956), Chapter X, pp. 78, 79.

⁹ See for example Sally Mussetter, 'Type as Prophet in the Old English *Guthlac B*', *Viator* 14 (1983), 41–58, p. 51, and further background and discussion below, pp. 38–39.

¹⁰ See *The Exeter Anthology*, ed. Muir, Riddle 31, line 19 (p. 310). The phrase 'wordum *lacan*' is reminiscent of 'wordum *wrixlan*' ('to exchange words') in the account of the performance of the *scop* in *Beowulf*, line 874.

¹¹ *The Guthlac Poems*, ed. Roberts, pp. 36–43.

Jane Roberts comments that 'it is unlikely that a single recognisable source will ever be found', though the poem does seem to include allusions to a range of patristic and early medieval monastic texts.¹² Roberts characterises the differences between the two texts with the observation that:

The essentially homiletic and reflective *Guthlac A* is succeeded by a contrasting poem on Guthlac, an account of the saint's death after the definitive Latin life.¹³

The two Guthlac poems have usually been assigned a relatively early date by scholars, usually regarded as eighth- or possibly ninth-century in origin. Indeed, *Guthlac A* apparently identifies itself as an eighth-century composition. For example, the poem tells us that Guthlac suffered his temptations 'in gemyndigra monna tidum' ('in the times of people who remember', line 154), and there are apparent references throughout the poem to oral sources (for example 'we hyrdon oft', 'we often heard', line 108, and the claim that the text will rehearse 'þæt us neah gewearð ... gecyþed', 'what has recently been made known to us', lines 93–94). However, none of these brief references need necessarily imply that the poem was composed shortly after Guthlac's death. The cited sources may have been part of an established and long-running tradition, and the poem's claims to have 'heard' Guthlac's story may simply represent conventional authorising *topoi* in Anglo-Saxon literature which appeal to oral origins and the figure of the eye-witness.¹⁴

A very different thesis on the dating and origins of the Guthlac poems has been offered by Patrick Conner in his study *Anglo-Saxon Exeter: A Tenth Century Cultural History*, which investigates the production of the Exeter Book and the composition of its constituent texts. Through palaeographical and codicological analysis, Conner dates the individual booklets which form the Exeter Book itself, and argues, crucially, that the booklets' sequence of copying reflects the chronological order of composition of the texts themselves.¹⁵ Having recovered this order of composition, Conner argues, we are able to trace the development of Old English vernacular poetry through the tenth century, and to recognise and examine the cultural and literary impacts of the Benedictine reform in England. Based on palaeographical analysis, Conner identifies the booklet containing the two Guthlac poems (as well as the three *Christ* poems) as the latest to be copied, characterising these as 'monastic' poems which are 'limited to monastic concerns'.¹⁶ He suggests that these poems, unlike those within the Exeter

¹² Jane Roberts, 'Guthlac A: Sources and Source Hunting', in *Medieval English Studies presented to George Kane*, ed. Edward Donald Kennedy *et al.* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 1–18, p. 2. For an overview of possible sources for the poem, assimilating a range of previous scholarship, see Catherine A.M. Clarke, 'The Sources of *Guthlac A* (Cameron A.3.2.1)', 2001, *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici: World Wide Web Register*, <http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/>, accessed October 2011.

¹³ *The Guthlac Poems*, ed. Roberts, p. 49.

¹⁴ For another hagiographic example see Abbo's reference to Dunstan as a witness in his *Life of St Edmund*, in *Three Lives of English Saints*, ed. Michael Winterbottom (Toronto, 1972), pp. 65–87, p. 67.

¹⁵ Patrick Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter: A Tenth-Century Cultural History* (Woodbridge, 1993), pp. 148–49.

¹⁶ Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter*, p. 162.

Book which he dates earlier, show no use of Carolingian subject-matter and literary tradition, but instead 'are permeated with monastic sources, including learned sermons and liturgical texts'.¹⁷ Conner raises the possibility that these poems were composed in Exeter itself, and argues forcefully that 'all five were composed only after the full influence of the Benedictine revolution was felt', in the later tenth century.¹⁸

The interpretation of the Exeter Book offered by Conner has proved controversial and is far from universally accepted. For example, in his 1996 article 'The origin of the Exeter Book of Old English poetry', Richard Gameson presents a response to Conner's research and some alternative suggestions about the dating and provenance of the codex. Although Gameson still dates the Book to the 'mid- to third-quarter of the tenth century' he is more cautious about forming further hypotheses. The importance of Benedictine values and imagery to the Book is also questionable: the primary intended audience for the codex, at Exeter, was a community of unreformed clergy. However, the origins of the Exeter Book hypothesised by Gameson potentially tie it to Christ Church, Canterbury or (his favoured possibility) to Glastonbury, suggesting that the book and its contents would still have been shaped by Benedictine ideology.¹⁹ My reading of the Guthlac poems in this chapter also identifies a range of allusions and images within the texts which indicate the presence of Benedictine, or at least cenobitic monastic, interests in the book. Whilst there is currently no consensus on the origins of the Exeter Book or of the two Old English Guthlac poems, scholars do agree on the approximate date of the codex, allowing us to think productively about the use and reception of these texts in the broad cultural context of the mid to late tenth century.

In the Exeter Book, the two Guthlac poems are located together as consecutive texts, situated after the poem usually entitled *Christ III* (Muir prefers *Christ in Judgement*) and before *Azarias* (Muir titles this *The Canticle of the Three Youths*). Whilst the Guthlac poems are by separate authors and draw on different sources and literary traditions, this scribal juxtaposition within the codex raises the possibility that a reading which encompasses the two texts, looking across the poems for common themes or recurrent ideas, may be legitimate. Margaret Goldsmith has argued that the texts we now designate as *Guthlac A* and *B* were 'designed to be read as a sequence',²⁰ while Alexandra Olsen has raised the possibility that early medieval readers understood the Guthlac poems as 'one "composite" poem', arguing that 'we are not taking unwarranted liberties when we read *Guthlac*, a work presumably of multiple authorship, as a single, unified poem'.²¹ Although more cautious about the notion that the Guthlac poems might be read as a 'unified' work, Jane Roberts also

¹⁷ Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter*, p. 164. See also his more detailed analysis of the sources of *Guthlac A*, discussed below, pp. 19–20.

¹⁸ Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter*, p. 163.

¹⁹ Richard Gameson, 'The origin of the Exeter Book of Old English poetry', *ASE* 25 (1996), 135–85, pp. 161, 179. He does, however, ultimately comment that 'the origin of the Exeter Book of Old English poetry is unknown and probably unknowable' (p. 179).

²⁰ Margaret E. Goldsmith, *The Mode and Meaning of Beowulf* (London, 1970), p. 257.

²¹ Alexandra Hennessey Olsen, *Guthlac of Croyland: A Study of Heroic Hagiography* (Washington, 1981), pp. 66 and 113.

calls attention to some of their thematic inter-connections – as well as those amongst the poems of the Exeter Book more widely – suggesting that ‘[t]he poems can well be read in sequence, but not as a single narrative with linear progression, and the sequence should be extended backwards’ to the Christ poems, and perhaps onwards to the themes of virtue, divine protection and redemption in *Azarias* and *The Phoenix*.²²

Whilst the two Guthlac poems are distinct in terms of authorship and provenance, then, there is a strong case for reading them together. An interpretation which reaches across the two poems both responds to the careful design of the Exeter Book (and the active choices of its scribe, compiler or patron) in deliberately pairing these texts, and reflects the likely reading processes of the book’s early audiences who would have encountered these texts as a sequence. Certainly, as this discussion will show, a number of key themes develop across the Guthlac poems when they are read together. A central concept which recurs throughout the texts is that of spiritual power and inter-relationship and the shaping of obligations between individuals in a Christian context. In *Guthlac A* we see Guthlac undertake the role of an effective spiritual patron, advocate and intercessor for other monks, even though he is physically absent, defending them against the devils’ attacks. Guthlac in turn enjoys the patronage of his patron saint, Bartholomew, and Bartholomew himself describes his own privileged relationship with Christ as one of his close circle of disciples. *Guthlac B* focuses particularly on the intimate bond between Guthlac and Beccel, presenting a model of spiritual friendship which is both didactic and intensely affective. As well as direct representations of spiritual relationships, the two poems explore related concepts of economy and reciprocity, and the ways in which patronage functions within a strictly hierarchical religious order.

In the history of scholarship on the Old English *Guthlac A*, the first 92 lines of the poem have persistently presented difficulties and apparent anomalies. Roberts reviews some of the early work on the poem in her edition of the Guthlac poems, including the 1842 edition of the *Codex Exoniensis* by Benjamin Thorpe, in which the first 92 lines are divided into two separate poems: the hypothesised second part of a poem ‘Of Souls after Death etc.’ (lines 1–29) and a ‘Poem Moral and Religious (lines 30–92).’²³ Yet, whilst the more straightforward, recognisable account of Guthlac’s life starts only at line 93, this initial section of the poem, now often referred to as the ‘Prologue’, in fact sets up many of the concepts and themes which are central to *Guthlac A*, and which resonate across both of the Exeter Book Guthlac poems. The Prologue to *Guthlac A* is acutely interested in rank, hierarchy and the categorisation of men, as well as in models of moral and spiritual economy, such as virtue and its reward, the earning of God’s favour, and divine reckoning. These key themes, foregrounded in universal terms in the first section of the poem, provide an important framework for understanding representations of spiritual power and patronage across both of the Guthlac poems, and so this discussion will take the Prologue as its starting-point.

²² *The Guthlac Poems*, ed. Roberts, p. 49.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 15–19.

The Prologue begins its concentration on hierarchy, classification and enumeration with an overview of the different kinds of men and forms of sanctity found on earth. The poem declares that

Monge sindon geond middangeard
 hadas under heofonum, þa þe in haligra
 rim arisað.

Many are the kinds of men throughout the world which are counted in the number of the saints (lines 30–32a).

These lines may be an assertion of Guthlac's validity as a saint (a confessor) despite his lack of martyrdom, yet they also establish a world-view based on order, status and reckoning. Roberts and other commentators have observed the similarity between this passage and passages in Gregory and Lactantius, in which the different kinds of men are referred to with the Latin *gradus*, promoting even more clearly a model of mankind assembled in 'ranks' or 'grades'.²⁴ The very opening of the poem, which has presented most difficulty for scholars in terms of its integration into the main text of *Guthlac A*, itself foregrounds this issue of rank and order. The poem begins with an imagined meeting between an angel and an 'eadge sawl' ('blessed soul', line 2a) after death, in which an aside notes that the angel 'hafað yldran had' ('has the higher / older degree', line 4b). The adjective 'yldran' is ambiguous, but in his detailed study of the passage Arthur Groos has suggested that 'it potentially conveys meanings of both greater age and greater rank', immediately calling attention to the placing of the angel and the human soul within a divinely-ordered hierarchy.²⁵ Groos suggests that the entirety of the subsequent poem shows how the hierarchical relationship between men and angels may become 'variable', and how Guthlac recovers an angel-like status through his saintly life.²⁶ Indeed, the angel's address to the soul as 'tidfara' (literally 'time-traveller', line 9b) might suggest its ability to step out of the conventional order ordained by temporality and into an alternative, eternal, pre-Lapsarian moment. From the start, the poem presents a cosmology based on order, categorisation and hierarchy – but perhaps also hints that, in exceptional cases and moments, this order may be transcended.

Closely related to this emphasis on rank and classification, the Prologue to *Guthlac A* also focuses on concepts of spiritual and moral economy. In its overview of the saintly men amongst mankind it remarks that, for those who fear God 'þas woruldgestreon / on þa mæran god bimutad weorþað' ('these worldly gains will be exchanged for those more glorious goods', line 70b–71) in heaven. The poem depicts the activities of the righteous on earth, who reject the secular, worldly economy of material acquisition for a heavenly economics of gift and deferred reward.

²⁴ See *The Guthlac Poems*, ed. Roberts, p. 128 and Clarke, 'The Sources of *Guthlac A*', *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici* database.

²⁵ Arthur Groos, 'The "Elder" Angel in *Guthlac A*', *Anglia* 101 (1983), 141–46, p. 141.

²⁶ Groos, 'The "Elder" Angel', p. 143.

	Wuldres bycgað,
sellað ælmessan,	earme frefrað,
beoð rummode	ryhtra gestreona,
lufiað mid lacum	þa þe læs agun,
dæghwam dryhtne	þeowiaþ; he hyra sceawað.

They buy (eternal) glory, they give alms, they comfort the poor, they are generous with their rightful possessions, with gifts they are loving to those who own less, daily they serve the lord; he observes their actions (lines 76b–80).

The language of the market, of commerce and transaction, is pervasive here. The virtuous literally ‘buy’ their place in heaven, devoting their efforts to those who are ‘poor’ or ‘own less’. Love or *caritas* is equated directly with alms-giving – perhaps an expedient political message in a text which has been associated with monastic agendas and priorities. The phrase ‘lufiað mid lacum’ (literally ‘they love with gifts’) condenses a complex ideology of charity and tithing into a single alliterative idiom, suggesting that it is only through this active, practical gesture of donation that inner virtue may be realised and shown. Here we also find the first use of the term *lac* in the Guthlac poems, intersecting with Guthlac’s name and presenting the righteous life as a series of gifts given in anticipation of a heavenly return. Whilst serving the poor, these saintly men also serve God and earn his favour, placing them as intermediaries in a spiritual hierarchy of benefaction and protection. As the poem tells us here, God supervises their actions.

Throughout the Prologue, God is presented as a just lord who will reward those who serve him. Lines 15b–16a tell us that ‘He him ece lean / healdeð on heofonum’ (‘He keeps an eternal reward for them in the heavens’) and lines 91–92 characterise the righteous as those who will receive their recompense from God:

...þæt synd þa gecostan ceman	þa þam cyninge þeowað,
se næfre þa lean alegeð	þam þe his lufan adreogeð.

...these are the proven warriors who serve the king, who never withholds the reward from those who live in his love.

Here again, alongside a clear ideology of reward and reciprocation, this passage presents a hierarchical structure of service, supervision and recognition. The Prologue appropriates images familiar from secular heroic verse, such as that of the lord rewarding faithful retainers from his *giftstol*, and transfers them to a heavenly order of God and his saints. God is also imagined as ‘se hyhsta / ealra cyninga cyning’ who ‘ceastrum wealdeð’ (‘the highest king of all kings’ who ‘rules cities’, lines 16b–17), again reinforcing the model of spiritual hierarchy which extends above all earthly power and order. The image of the city is particularly apt here, introducing a section of the poem which draws on conceptual models derived from the urban world of commerce and trade. John Hines has observed that in this Prologue ‘[t]he holy life merges completely and elegantly with both a commercial exchange system and with a gift-based exchange system that served to create social alliances and security’, showing how the ‘recognition and acceptance of contemporary economic rules’ serve to underpin a spiritual order of virtue (or, in Hines’s terms, human ‘investment’) and

divine reward.²⁷ The underlying ethic of economy and reckoning extends even into the depiction of God's role as ultimate judge over mankind. Alluding to Matthew 22:16 ('multi enim sunt vocati, pauci vero electi'), the Prologue presents God in the role of surveyor or accountant, seeing mostly moral deficit and decline in the world and making the calculation of which few, out of the many, are worthy to be rewarded.

Dryhten sceawað
hwær þa eardien þe his æ healden;
gesihð he þa domas dogra gehwylce
wonian ond wendan of woruldryhte
ða he gesette þurh his sylfes word.
He fela findeð fea beoð gecorene.

The lord observes where those live who keep his law; every day he sees the decrees which he established through his own word lessen and diverge from worldly law. He meets with many but few are chosen (lines 54b–59).

Thus, throughout the Prologue to *Guthlac A*, ideas of economy, reciprocity and hierarchical order are strongly foregrounded and closely interwoven in a presentation of the inter-relationships between different kinds of men, and between man and God.

The textual sources upon which this Prologue is grounded also generate further associations with issues of hierarchy, rank and gradation. In his article 'Source Studies, the Old English *Guthlac A* and the Benedictine Reformation', Patrick Conner has assessed the text's use of 'monastic' materials, arguing (as with his later codicological study of the Exeter Book) that the evidence 'requires us to historicize *Guthlac A* in terms of the Benedictine reformation'.²⁸ Conner emphasises the importance, in particular, of the *Regula S. Benedicti* and Smaragdus's *Expositio in Regulam S. Benedicti* as sources for *Guthlac A*, showing persuasively that the first 92 lines of the poem are heavily indebted to these influential monastic texts.²⁹ For example, Conner links the discussion of the 'hadas' or 'kinds, degrees' of men in lines 30–32 to Chapter One, Lection One of the Benedictine Rule, which sets out the four different classes of monk including both the 'cenobites' and the 'anchorites', as well as Smaragdus's commentary on this passage.³⁰ Conner also suggests a connection between lines 70b–80, which describes those who exchange worldly treasures for heavenly and are observed by God, and Chapter Seven, Lection Three of the *Regula Benedicti*. Part of the exposition of the twelve steps of humility, this passage reminds the reader that every man must recognise that he is 'de caelis a Deo semper respici omni hora et facta sua omni loco ab aspectu divinitatis videri et ab angelis omni hora renuntiari' ('at every hour in the sight of God in heaven, and that his actions are

²⁷ John Hines, *Voices in the Past: English Literature and Archaeology* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 65.

²⁸ Patrick Conner, 'Source Studies, the Old English *Guthlac A* and the Benedictine Reformation', *Revue Bénédictine* 103 (1993), 380–413, p. 410.

²⁹ Conner builds on the work of a number of previous scholars. See the overview in Clarke, 'The Sources of *Guthlac A*', *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici* database.

³⁰ To these possible sources can be added Gregory and Lactantius, as discussed above, p. 17.

everywhere visible to the divine eyes of God, and are being reported to God by the angels from moment to moment').³¹ The steps of humility, as set out in this chapter of the Rule, are imagined as a ladder with different degrees of spiritual progress ranked as different rungs. By climbing the ladder, an individual may ascend to a 'exaltationem illam caelestem' ('state of heavenly exaltation'),³² presenting a paradox of spiritual elevation through humility and self-abnegation. As a key source underlying the Prologue to *Guthlac A*, the *Regula S. Benedicti* (together with Smaragdus's commentary on it) again calls attention to rank, status, degree and hierarchical order. The source material used here once again establishes key themes of economy and hierarchy which will be relevant to both of the Exeter Book Guthlac poems, and also situates the saint's story within a broader monastic context.

It is well recognised that the two Old English Guthlac poems – and especially *Guthlac A* – explore Guthlac's movement from secular, earthly community to life as an anchorite and his re-positioning within a spiritual community under God. Felix's Latin *Vita* of the saint also charts the development of Guthlac's vocation, giving a brief account of his early life as a warrior, his period as a monk at Repton, and ultimately his retreat into the fens and establishment of his hermitage at Crowland. Felix foregrounds the importance of fellowship and the bonds of the warrior comitatus in Guthlac's martial career, telling us how 'adgregatis satellitum turmis' ('gathering bands of followers') he takes up arms. Later, when Guthlac experiences repentance for his warrior life and chooses to become a monk, his companions ('comitantibus') react with regret and protestations which suggest the close bonds they have shared as a fighting band.

Hoc audito, comites ipsius, immense perculsi stupore, supplicibus obsecrationibus, ne hoc, quod dicebat, incepisset, exorabant; qui contemtis eorum precibus, in eo, quod inceperat, inmotus perstabat.

His comrades, when they heard this were struck with overwhelming amazement, and besought him with prayers and supplications not to undertake what he proposed; but he despised their prayers and persisted, unmoved, in his undertaking.³³

Felix explains how, in choosing the life of a monk, Guthlac 'parentes et patriam comitesque adolescentiae suae contempsit' ('spurned his parents, his fatherland, and the comrades of his youth'),³⁴ removing himself from the secular networks of kin, friendship and kingdom which had previously been crucial to his identity and experience. Replacing these secular communities with the spiritual fellowship of the monastery at Repton, Guthlac is at first 'omnibus fratribus illic cohabitantibus aspero

³¹ *Sancti Benedicti, Regula Monachorum*, ed. Philibertus Schmitz (Gembloux, 1946), p. 23. Translation from *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, trans. Abbott Parry (Leominster, 2000), p. 25.

³² *Sancti Benedicti, Regula Monachorum*, ed. Schmitz, p. 22. Translation from *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, trans. Parry, p. 25.

³³ *Life of St Guthlac*, Ch. XIX, pp. 82, 83.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

odio habebatur' ('intensely hated by all the brethren who lived with him there')³⁵ on account of his very strict manner of observance and rejection of all alcoholic drink (except for the communion wine). Later, however, 'cunctorum animos in affectum suae caritatis convertit' ('the hearts of all of them were turned to an affectionate love of him').³⁶ Yet Guthlac chooses also to leave this community, when he reads about the lives of solitary monks and is inspired 'heremum quaerere fervebat' ('to make his way to the desert').³⁷ Repeatedly in Guthlac's life, relationships and obligations are rejected and re-formed, moving in stages from the world of secular, human concerns through degrees of spiritual refinement towards the realisation of his life as a solitary and the establishment of his hermitage at Crowland. Guthlac's worldly ties and responsibilities are ultimately replaced with economies of relationship and reciprocity in a new spiritual context, with the apparently isolated world of the fens in fact characterised by its own complex networks of allegiance, hierarchy and power.

Guthlac A explores in detail Guthlac's move away from human community and the challenges this entails, as well as the ways in which the saint ultimately maintains involvement and engagement with the lives of monks beyond his hermitage. In the poem, the devils' temptations centre on appeals to Guthlac to return to human society and fulfil the obligations determined by friendship and kinship. For example, the demons:

cwædon þæt he on þam beorge byrnan sceolde
 ond his lichoman lig forswelgan,
 þæt his earfeþu eal gelumpe
 modcearu mægum, gif he monna dream
 of þam orlege eft ne wolde
 sylfa gesecan, ond his sibbe ryht
 mid moncynne maran cræfte
 willum bewitigan, lætan wræce stille.

said that he would have to burn on that hill and his body be swallowed up in flame so that his suffering would absolutely cause grief for his kin, if he was not willing to turn from that battle and back to human joy, and to observe with greater intent and effort his kinship duties amongst mankind, and let the feud rest (lines 192–99).

'[H]is sibbe ryht' might suggest both the rights and inheritance due to Guthlac himself through kin as well as his own responsibilities and obligations to his family, reflecting the reciprocity inherent in human relationships. The devils tell Guthlac that he should 'far þær ðu freonde wene, gif ðu þines feores recce' ('go where you expect to find friends, if you care about your life', line 291), and argue that, by removing himself from the supportive networks of kinship and friendship, he becomes uniquely vulnerable.

³⁵ *Life of St Guthlac*, Chapter XXI, pp. 84, 85.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 86, 87.

'Nec þec mon hider mose fedeð;
 beoð þe hungor ond þurst hearde gewinnan,
 gif þu gewitest swa wilde deor
 ana from eþele. Nis þæt onginn wiht.
 Geswic þisses setles. Ne mæg þec sellan ræd
 mon gelæran þonne þeos mengu eall.
 We þe beoð holde gif ðu us hyran wilt...'

'No one here will nourish you with food; hunger and thirst will be fierce enemies to you, if you go away, like the wild animals, alone, from your homeland. This is a worthless scheme. Give up this seat. No one can give you better advice than all this host. We will be kind to you if you will listen to us...' (lines 274–80).

Here the demons appropriate the language of advice, offering Guthlac 'ræd', claiming that no one can instruct or teach him ('gelæran', line 279a) better than them, and using imperative verb forms. The first lines here, with the pairing of the twin enemies of hunger and thirst and their claim that Guthlac has gone into the wilderness 'swa wilde deor', are suggestive of proverbial collocations or the imagery of Old English verse maxims, gathering for themselves yet another apparent linguistic marker of authority.³⁸ Here the devils offer themselves as replacements for the human friends and kin left behind by Guthlac, simultaneously formulating an alternative hierarchy in which he should defer to their instruction, advice and commands. They propose a simple exchange, a straightforward reciprocal arrangement, by which Guthlac listens to their words and they keep friendship with him. Yet their language is slippery and ambiguous throughout. In lines 452–54 they claim that:

'No we þe þus swiðe swencan þorftan,
 þær þu fromlice freonda larum
 hyran wolde...'

'We would not have needed to afflict you so greatly if you had been willing to listen to the advice of friends from the start...'

The 'friends' referred to here are deliberately vague, as the devils blur their alternative arguments between returning to human community and accepting their own, suggestively inhabiting the role of friends and counsellors themselves. Yet Guthlac is not persuaded by the demons' rhetoric, and asserts his determination to live as an anchorite.

The recent reading of *Guthlac A* by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen has focused on this move from community to isolation, noting that '[i]n resisting the demonic call for a return to community, Guthlac stages a public rejection of secular, heroic masculinity and the intersubjectivity upon which it depends in favour of the solitary

³⁸ See for example *Maxims I* in Muir, ed., *The Exeter Anthology*, pp. 254–59. The image of Guthlac retreating into the wilderness like a wild animal also recalls the biblical narrative of Nebuchadnezzar's repentance. See Penelope B.R. Doob, *Nebuchadnezzar's Children: Conventions of Madness in Middle English Literature* (New Haven, 1974), pp. 162–63.

individualization of eremitic sanctity.³⁹ Cohen argues that '[f]iliation, kinship and inheritance ('his sibbe ryht', 197), the network of familial and social relations through which a rigidly hierarchical mode of being was maintained in early northern European culture, are rejected for the isolating ascesis of the eremite.'⁴⁰ He suggests that both the warrior comitatus of Guthlac's youth and the monastic community at Repton share 'the identity-sustaining order of hierarchical structure'⁴¹ and that Guthlac moves emphatically from this to 'anchored singularity'.⁴² Whilst Cohen's interpretation of *Guthlac A* offers many new insights and productive imaginative links between the text and its various contexts (historical and critical), this reading of Guthlac's asceticism fails to recognise the careful, systematic ways in which the poem presents his continued involvement in human networks, as well as his integration into a new spiritual community – and strictly-ordered hierarchy – under God. The devils in the poem make the mistake of assuming that Guthlac's physical withdrawal from society means that he is now left without the supporting network of a kin or community. As George E. Nicholas has commented:

In the devils' somewhat legalistic point of view, withdrawal from society is identical with withdrawal from the *maegþ*, so that once Guthlac has removed himself from his ordinary worldly matrix he appears to be alone and, as far as they can see, should be an easy target. They do not at first connect him with the invisible society of which he is part.⁴³

While Cohen argues that 'communal systems of identity and the celebration of homosociality [are abandoned] for the tranquil encounter of one soul with God',⁴⁴ *Guthlac A* in fact presents a spiritual world in which identity is still relational, defined by context and shaped by a hierarchically-ordered community.

Guthlac A tells us explicitly that Guthlac continues to actively participate in a broader spiritual community, offering himself as patron and intercessor for mankind more widely.

No he hine wið monna miltse gedælde,
ac gesynta bæd sawla gehwylcre,
þonne he to eorðan on þam anade
hleor onhyldre.

He did not cut himself off from mercy towards mankind, but instead prayed for the salvation of every soul when he bowed his face to the ground in that solitude (lines 331–34a).

³⁹ Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines* (Minneapolis, 2003), p. xxvi.

⁴⁰ Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines*, p. 126.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 126.

⁴³ George E. Nicholas, 'Monasticism and the Social Temptation in the Old English *Guthlac A*', *The American Benedictine Review* 46 (1995), 444–58, p. 452.

⁴⁴ Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines*, p. 131.

The poem deliberately plays with paradox here, suggesting how this apparent ‘anad’ (‘solitude’) can simultaneously be a place of spiritual fellowship. The form ‘No he ... ac’ (‘He did not ... but instead’) acknowledges the counter-intuitive, miraculous nature of this situation: in his isolation, Guthlac the hermit continues to involve himself actively in the spiritual affairs of humanity. Whilst Guthlac extends this spiritual patronage to the whole of mankind, the poem also gives particular attention to his role as spiritual protector and defender of those in monastic communities. In lines 412–20, the devils show Guthlac a vision of the decadent behaviour of young monks in monasteries, who enjoy worldly pleasure and vanity rather than the spiritual refinement and humility they should practise. Significantly, this lapse from the monastic ideal seems to occur when hierarchical order breaks down and ‘þær þæs ealdres egsa ne styreð’ (line 420, ‘when they are not checked by the fear of a superior’). In lines 465–69 the devils again criticise the hypocrisy of those (most probably monks are again the target) who outwardly serve God whilst privately indulging gluttony and pride. In response to these accusations, Guthlac makes a substantial speech in defence of the young monks, insisting that ‘God scop geoguðe ond gumena dream’ (line 495, ‘God created young people and human happiness’), and arguing that wisdom and restraint develop with age and maturity. Thus, rather than merely insisting on his own superior virtue as a solitary ascetic and condemning these imperfect monks, Guthlac positions himself as spiritual patron to this wider monastic community, speaking in universalised, sententious terms which incorporate his own experience – and may even deliberately allude to his own spiritual progression from youth to maturity. Rather than separating himself from the rest of mankind, Guthlac draws on the authority and seniority of his status as a tested ascetic, and as a man who has reached full maturity, to assume the role of intercessor and spiritual protector for others.

The centrality of images of community and fellowship – and in particular the promotion of cenobitic monastic values – in *Guthlac A* have been recognised and examined by a number of scholars. Christopher Jones’s study ‘Envisioning the *cenobium* in the Old English *Guthlac A*’ explores ‘the poem’s accommodation of events and images from the saint’s life to the trappings and attitudes of the cloister’, arguing that it ‘allows its audience, by an exercise of pious imagination, to see in Guthlac a good Benedictine like themselves’.⁴⁵ Jones notes that the Benedictine monastic life ‘would almost certainly have influenced how the poem was read and understood in the tenth-century intellectual circles that produced the Exeter Book’,⁴⁶ resonating with Conner’s conclusions about the sources of the poem and its function within the reformed cenobitic monasticism of the period.⁴⁷ Certainly, the poem’s careful symbolic alignment of the solitary, ascetic life of Guthlac with the norms of communal monasticism fits within the politics and ideology of the tenth-century

⁴⁵ Christopher Jones, ‘Envisioning the *Cenobium* in the Old English *Guthlac A*’, *Mediaeval Studies* 57 (1995), 59–91, p. 291.

⁴⁶ Jones, ‘Envisioning the *Cenobium*’, p. 289.

⁴⁷ Conner, ‘Source Studies, the Old English *Guthlac A* and the English Benedictine Reformation’; see discussion above, pp. 19–20.

Benedictine reform. In the context of this renewed emphasis on the cenobitic life, the production of texts dealing with solitary saints was unusual: both Malcolm Godden and Mary Clayton comment, for example, on Ælfric's avoidance of eremitic saints as subjects, reflecting a declining interest in, or perhaps even mistrust of, the solitary monastic life.⁴⁸ In *Guthlac A*, emphasis is placed on Guthlac's participation in wider cenobitic monasticism, despite his bodily absence. Although physically removed and remote, he works effectively as a spiritual intercessor for other Christians (and most particularly monks), taking his rightful place of seniority within a well-ordered, hierarchical society. Whilst he settles alone in the fenland wilderness, Guthlac's power

transcends the locality of the *beorg*, and may be sought by all who, like the poet and his audience, foster his cult. Guthlac is not just a moral example for monks; he is actively their friend, protector and patron.⁴⁹

Across the two Guthlac poems of the Exeter Book, Guthlac both gives and receives patronage within an extended spiritual community. Whilst Guthlac undertakes the role of patron and guardian to other monks, he in turn benefits from the patronage of those placed higher in the spiritual hierarchy. Throughout both *Guthlac A* and *B*, repeated references indicate the importance of Guthlac's role as a privileged recipient of patronage, enjoying the protection and guidance of a spiritual guardian. *Guthlac A* alludes recurrently to an 'engel' ('angel', for example, lines 172b, 190a, 315a) who comforts and supports Guthlac during his trials. The angel is often described as a guardian or protector (for example, 'weard', 'guardian', line 105b; 'fæle freoðuweard', 'gracious guardian of peace', line 173a), and Guthlac comments that an angel 'mec ... oft afrefeð' ('often comforts me', line 315). Guthlac also speaks of the support of the 'halig gæst' ('holy spirit', line 361b), and the poem repeatedly reminds us that the saint receives the special protection of God (for example, 'hine weorude god / freoðade on foldan', 'the God of hosts comforted him on earth', lines 395b–386a; God 'hine scilde', 'shielded him', line 404a). As we might expect, Guthlac's identity is positioned very differently in this relationship with the divine. Instead of acting as spiritual superior and patron, as in his protection and intercession for the young monks, Guthlac is now 'dryhtnes þeow' ('the lord's servant', line 314b) and God's 'wergenga' ('follower', line 594b).⁵⁰ Whilst the role of the comforting angel is only hinted at in *Guthlac A*, in *Guthlac B* the saint's revelation about this particular form of miraculous patronage occurs as the climactic point in the poem, just before the

⁴⁸ Malcolm Godden 'Ælfric and the Vernacular Prose Tradition', in *The Old English Homily and its Backgrounds*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach and Bernard F. Huppé (Albany, 1978), pp. 99–117, p. 108; Mary Clayton, 'Hermits and the Contemplative Life in Anglo-Saxon England', in *Holy Men and Holy Women: Old English Prose Saints' Lives and their Contexts*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach (New York, 1996), pp. 147–75, pp. 156–57.

⁴⁹ Jones, 'Envisioning the Cenobium', p. 279.

⁵⁰ A rare compound and difficult word, *wergenga* is discussed by Roberts in her edition, where she suggests that the first element may derive from *waru* 'shelter, protection' or *wær*, 'pledge, agreement'. *The Guthlac Poems*, ed. Roberts, p. 151, n. The word also occurs at *Guthlac A*, line 713a (see analysis of the passage below).

saint's death. In response to pressing questions from his disciple, Beccel, and after numerous protestations, Guthlac finally explains how an angel has visited him throughout his time in retreat.

'Symle me onsende sigedryhten min,
folca feorhgiefa, sibþan ic furþum ongon
on þone æfteran anseld bugan
geargemearces, gæsthaligne,
engel ufancundne, se mec efna gehwam,
mehtig meotudes þegn, ond on morgne eft,
sigorfæst gesohte, ond me sara gehwylc
gehælde hygesorge...'

'Always, since the second year after I first occupied this hermitage, my lord of victories, the people's life-giver, has sent to me a holy spirit, a heavenly angel, who has visited me every evening – a mighty servant of the creator, strong in his victory – and also in the morning, and has healed every pain and trouble in my mind...' (lines 1238–45a).

This revelation is a powerful moment within the poem, in which the reader's horizons are suddenly extended just as they are for Beccel, listening to his master speak these words. Having been presented as the spiritual authority throughout the poem (through his close relationship with Beccel, and his guidance of other visitors to his retreat), Guthlac is now revealed himself to be a pupil, receiving tuition and consolation from his own angelic protector. Having focused tightly on the intimate relationship between Guthlac and Beccel, the poem now opens out to show the saint's position within a greater spiritual hierarchy. Indeed, even the angel is described as 'meotudes þegn', appropriating secular heroic terminology to depict him, in turn, as a close follower and 'thane' of God within this finely-graded spiritual order.

Amongst these many forms of spiritual patronage and protection enjoyed by Guthlac himself throughout the two Guthlac poems, *Guthlac A* places particular emphasis on the saint's relationship with Bartholomew, his own special patron and protector. Felix tells us that Guthlac arrives at Crowland on St Bartholomew's feast day, remarking that he 'in sancti Bartholomei auxiliis, cum omni fiducia heremum habitare coeperat' ('began to inhabit the desert with complete confidence in the help of Bartholomew').⁵¹ In *Guthlac A*, the arrival of Bartholomew to help Guthlac in his battle against the devils is reserved until nearly the end of the poem, functioning (just like the revelation of the angelic guide in *Guthlac B*) as the climactic moment in the narrative, which enables Guthlac's triumph and the restoration of the *beorg* to prelapsarian, pastoral beauty. Bartholomew comes to intervene in the conflict between Guthlac and the devils at line 684 of *Guthlac A*, where he is described as 'dryhtnes ar' ('the lord's messenger', line 684b), again calling attention to his role as an intermediary within a spiritual hierarchy. His speech is introduced with a high level

⁵¹ *Life of Saint Guthlac*, Chapter XXV, pp. 88–89. See also Jane Roberts, 'St Bartholomew's Day: A Problem Resolved?', *Medium Ævum* 46 (1977), 16–19.

of poetic variation, exploring the many facets of his identity in relation to others placed within this carefully-ranked order.

Ofermægga spræc,
dyre dryhtnes þegn, dæghluttre scan –
hæfde Guðlaces gæst in gewældum
modig mundbora, meahtum spedig...

The elder spoke, the lord's beloved thane, he shone with daylight – he had Guthlac's spirit in his care, the brave protector, rich in powers... (lines 692b–95).

A *hapax legomen*, *ofermæg* means literally 'the kinsman above' or 'the superior kinsman', alluding both to his arrival from the heavens – symbolically located above *middangeard* in the early medieval cosmological hierarchy – and also his status as senior to Guthlac in spiritual terms, as an apostle of God.⁵² Yet the verse also positions Bartholomew in relation to those above him in the spiritual hierarchy, identifying him as, in turn, God's 'thane' or close follower, servant and warrior, balancing celebration of his own protective powers with a reminder that he is not, of course, the ultimate authority.

Bartholomew's own speech to the devils is a key passage in the poem which articulates an ideology of spiritual power and hierarchy. Yet the specific vocabulary selected here simultaneously suggests that the rigid structures of hierarchical order can be transcended or collapsed, and that certain special, privileged relationships can 'short-circuit' the distance between individuals in a spiritual hierarchy. Bartholomew addresses the devils:

‘Ic eom se dema, se mec dryhten heht
snude gesecgan, þæt ge him sara gehwylc
hondum gehælde, ond him hearsume
on his sylfes dom sibþan wæron.
Ne sceal ic mine onsyn fore eowere
mengu miþan. Ic eom meotudes þegn.
Eom ic þara twelfa sum þe he getreoweste
under monnes hiw mode gelufade.
He mec of heofonum hider onsende,
geseah þæt ge on eorðan fore æfstum
on his wergengan wite legdon.
Is þæt min broþor mec his bysgu gehreaw.
Ic þæt gefremme, þær se freond wunað
on þære socne, þe ic þa sibbe wið hine

⁵² See the discussion in Graham Jones, 'Ghostly mentor, teacher of mysteries: Bartholomew, Guthlac and the Apostle's cult in early medieval England', in *Medieval Monastic Education*, ed. George Ferzoco and Carolyn Muessig (Leicester, 2000), pp. 136–52, p. 142. Whilst this paper imposes some rather anachronistic modern concepts onto the poem (for example, the devils' torments seen in terms of 'clinical symptoms', Bartholomew imagined as 'mentor' or 'role model' selected by Guthlac) it offers some useful reflections on the role of Bartholomew in the poem, and the possible associations between the saint and the conversion of pagan sites (esp. pp. 144–49).

healdan wille, nu ic his helpan mot,
 þæt ge min onsynn oft sceawiað.
 Nu ic his geneahhe neosan wille;
 sceal ic his word ond his weorc in gewitnesse
 dryhtne lædan - he his dæde conn.⁵³

'I am the judge: the lord commanded me to say at once that you should heal each of his wounds with your own hands, and afterwards be obedient to him according to his own judgement. I must not hide my face in front of the multitude of you. I am the creator's thane. I am one of that twelve whom he, in human shape, loved as most loyal. He sent me here from the heavens, he saw that on earth, out of envy, you were inflicting torments on his follower. He is my brother: his affliction grieved me. I swear it, that while this friend (with whom, now I am allowed to be his support, I intend to keep up friendship) is living in this sanctuary, you will often see my face. Now I intend to visit him often; I will bring his words and deeds to the lord in witness – he shall know his doings' (lines 703–21).

Here Bartholomew actively intervenes as Guthlac's spiritual protector, putting an end to the devils' attacks. He announces himself as 'se dema', yet the first four lines here in fact present a chain of authority which accommodates Bartholomew, Guthlac and God in a hierarchy of power.⁵³ Whilst Bartholomew is introduced as the judge, it is God who has commanded him to deliver this message, and, afterwards (though the pronoun is somewhat ambiguous here), it seems that the devils will be obliged to follow the 'judgement' and commands of Guthlac himself. As the most senior spiritual figure involved in this scene, Bartholomew's power and authority are emphasised continually throughout this passage. He expresses his intention to support Guthlac now and in the future, to intercede on his behalf with God, and defend him from the devils. The two references to his 'onsynn' ('face', lines 707, 718) seem to indicate the sudden manifestation of his physical presence: a transformation from absent spiritual patron to bodily-present champion which rewards Guthlac's faith and forms an act of reciprocation for his long endurance.⁵⁴ Bartholomew's seniority and authority derive from his status as an apostle – 'para twelfa sum' ('one of that twelve') – and the unique physical interaction and proximity he enjoyed with God incarnate ('in monnes hiw'), as well as his continuing status in heaven. Yet, once again, this reference to Bartholomew's dual identity – as both judge and disciple – calls attention to the extended spiritual hierarchy which defines roles according to context. Bartholomew himself is God's 'þegn', sent and commanded by God, and the construction 'nu ic his helpan mot' ('now I am allowed to be his support') indicates

⁵³ This concept of a 'chain' of hierarchy resonates with models presented by studies of patronage in a range of historical contexts, including Bloch, *Feudal Society*, vol. 1, p. 145, and Johnson and Dandeker, 'Patronage: relation and system', pp. 219–38, p. 223, where patronage is described as not 'a type of relationship but as a complex and hierarchically organised series of chains of such relationships'.

⁵⁴ Biblically, the image of looking upon the face of God signifies the privileged close, physical relationship with the divine enjoyed by virtuous souls after death. See for example Revelations 22: 3–4.

the working of a higher authority. Once again, *Guthlac A* shows its acute consciousness of the order of rank and hierarchy within which all individuals must be positioned.

This close attention to rank and hierarchy has been identified as typical of Anglo-Saxon formulations of social order and, in particular, to the structures of power and authority promoted by the tenth-century Benedictine Reforms in England. Throughout her study *Tradition and Belief: Religious Writing in Late Anglo-Saxon England*, Clare Lees returns repeatedly to concepts of hierarchy as an organising principle within late Anglo-Saxon society and, especially, within religious culture and forms of didactic writing. For example, she comments that 'social and familial relations within Anglo-Saxon Christianity are conceived of as a series of fixed states or ranks, each with their own moral duties or responsibilities, specific to secular or ecclesiastical spheres'.⁵⁵ Stacy Klein has also discussed the increased emphasis on hierarchy associated with the tenth-century monastic reforms, remarking that 'the Benedictine Reforms ushered into England a profound emphasis on hierarchy, specifically, a demarcation of clear boundaries between various classes of people – clergy and laity, male and female – and the duties appropriate to people of different social stations'.⁵⁶ Whilst both of these commentators pay particular attention to the intersections between hierarchical roles and gender in late Anglo-Saxon England, their analyses highlight the wider social and cultural context within which the *Guthlac* poems' presentation of relationships would have been situated. Significantly, however, Klein suggests that these social hierarchies are not necessarily fixed and inflexible, but, in special contexts, can be refigured and imagined in new ways:⁵⁷ a dynamic which can certainly be traced through the Old English *Guthlac* poems and their representations of spiritual patronage.

Bartholomew's speech to the devils is also striking in its recurrent use of vocabulary associated with friendship and kinship in order to express the privileged bond which connects him with *Guthlac*. Bartholomew describes *Guthlac* as his 'broþor' and 'freond', declaring that he will maintain 'sibbe' ('kinship', 'friendship') with him. Moreover, *Guthlac*'s torments provoke an affective response in Bartholomew, who tells the devils that 'mec his bysgu gehreaw' ('his affliction grieved me'), suggesting a powerful personal connection. Yet it would be a mistake to interpret this vocabulary simply as a discourse of affect and emotional experience (though the emotive resonance is important). The language of this speech invites associations with wider Germanic practices of artificial or extended kinship, including friendship, and the terminology conventionally used to express and formalise these relationships and their 'promise of protection'.⁵⁸ By using this formal language of friendship and kinship, Bartholomew demonstrates that *Guthlac* has been

⁵⁵ Clare A. Lees, *Tradition and Belief: Religious Writing in Late Anglo-Saxon England* (Minneapolis, 1999), p. 123.

⁵⁶ Stacy S. Klein, 'Reading Queenship in Cynewulf's *Elene*', *JMEMS* 33 (2003), 47–89, p. 74.

⁵⁷ Klein, 'Reading Queenship in Cynewulf's *Elene*', p. 78.

⁵⁸ D.H. Green, *Language and History in the Early Germanic World* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 49. At pp. 52–53 Green also discusses the semantic range of Germanic cognates of *sibb* and *freond* – terms closely aligned in this passage of *Guthlac A*.

incorporated into a network of protection and mutual obligation just like that of the family group. Indeed, the use of kinship language here may reflect the development of ideologies of 'spiritual kinship' in early medieval Europe, enabled through Christian baptism, which paralleled and gradually replaced Germanic practices of fostering.⁵⁹ Friendship and kinship, of course, involve hierarchies of their own. Yet Bartholomew's adoption of Guthlac as friend and brother admits the saint into a privileged, high-status spiritual community, in which he can enjoy the protection and support of those far above him in the usual spiritual order.

In addition to these broader Germanic linguistic and ideological backgrounds, the specific functions of friendship language in later Anglo-Saxon England also illuminate this passage of *Guthlac A*, allowing us to recognise more clearly the ways in which friendship vocabulary can work to negotiate and challenge normal hierarchies. Julia Barrow comments on the use of friendship language in Anglo-Saxon charters, noting that:

As a rule, the use of friendship terminology implies a relative equality between the parties linked by the relationship: relative rather than absolute, since in many cases the purpose of a party in seeking friendship was to win the protection of someone more powerful.⁶⁰

Barrow's work on the language of friendship in Anglo-Saxon documents calls attention to its special characteristics as a discourse which can write individuals or groups into expedient, advantageous relationships, avoiding language which might imply hierarchy and euphemising any asymmetry in status between the parties. In just this way, in *Guthlac A*, the language of friendship allows Guthlac to claim the support of a powerful spiritual patron. More generally, Gerd Althoff has reminded us that medieval friendship should be regarded not as 'a bond of feeling, but rather a contract involving rights and obligations'.⁶¹ This emphasis on the legal dimensions of friendship, too, has particular relevance to *Guthlac A*. The high incidence of prosaic language in the poem has been recognised and discussed, with Jane Roberts identifying as a specific group 'legal' prosaic words or collocations in the text.⁶² These include 'sibbe ryht' (line 197b), the term used to express Guthlac's rightful expectations from, and responsibilities to, his kin, as well as a number of others. The vocabulary of Bartholomew's speech to the devils is markedly legalistic, including the following forms noted by Roberts: 'on his sylfes dom' ('according to his own judgement'), 'socne' ('sanctuary') and 'wergenga' ('follower'; also at line 594b).⁶³ Bartholomew's speech seems to be scrupulously careful and precise in its choice of lexis to express status, authority and obligation, perhaps answering the devils' own

⁵⁹ Joseph H. Lynch, *Christianizing Kinship. Ritual Sponsorship in Anglo-Saxon England* (Ithaca, 1998).

⁶⁰ Julia Barrow, 'Friends and friendship in Anglo-Saxon Charters', in *Friendship in Medieval Europe*, ed. Julian Haseldine (Stroud, 1999), pp. 106–23, p. 106.

⁶¹ Gerd Althoff, 'Friendship and Political Order', in *Friendship in Medieval Europe*, ed. Julian Haseldine (Stroud, 1999), pp. 91–105, p. 92.

⁶² See *The Guthlac Poems*, ed. Roberts, pp. 50–52; E.G. Stanley, 'Studies in the Prosaic Language of Old English Verse', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 72 (1971), 385–418.

⁶³ *The Guthlac Poems*, ed. Roberts, p. 50.

earlier challenges to Guthlac based on the legal, or at least traditional, obligations of human community and kinship. Bartholomew's use of friendship language is part of this considered, formal discourse, articulating his binding undertaking to support and protect Guthlac, beyond any simple affective bond. Bartholomew's speech as Guthlac's spiritual patron is thus complex and ambivalent. Throughout these lines, he insists on hierarchical order, ranking himself and Guthlac precisely within a graded spiritual community. Yet he also deploys the language of friendship and artificial kinship, with its apparent power to bridge hierarchical distance or asymmetry in status. The relationship of spiritual patronage between Guthlac and Bartholomew thus appears simultaneously to sustain the dual discourses and ideologies of rigid hierarchical order, and the special bonds of friendship and extended kinship which, in the words of Julian Haseldine, can 'operat[e] outside' of and perhaps circumvent normal power structures.⁶⁴

When read as a sequence, the two Guthlac poems of the Exeter Book offer a movement from the central relationship between Bartholomew and Guthlac (*Guthlac A*) to that between Guthlac and Beccel (*Guthlac B*). Just as Bartholomew's speech in *Guthlac A* depicts a chain of patronage and power extending from God, via himself, down to Guthlac, so the two poems form a concatenation of relationships, moving towards Guthlac's own disciple – a possible mirror for the audience themselves within the text. Guthlac's spiritual protection of Beccel in *Guthlac B* is located within the wider spiritual guidance and 'frofre' ('comfort', line 888b) which he offers to those who visit his retreat.

Hwylum mennisce
 aras eaðmedum eft neosedon,
 ond þær siðfrome on þam sigewonge
 æþ þam halgan þeowan helpe gemetton,
 ferðþes frofre. Nænig forþum wæs,
 þæt he æwiscmod eft siðade,
 hean, hyhta leas, ac se halga wer
 ælda gehwylces þurh þa æþelan meah
 þe hine seoslige sohtun on ðearfe,
 hæleð hygegeomre...

At times again human messengers would humbly visit him and there on that field of victory eager ones would meet with help from the holy servant, comfort of the spirit. There was not a single one who departed again ashamed, low, without hope, but the holy man healed through special power his every one of those people, sad in mind, who, troubled, sought him in their time of need (lines 919b–928a).

The role of the saint as patron and counsellor is a recurrent element in texts relating to Guthlac, with patronage featuring strongly in the earliest *Vita* by Felix. Catherine Cubitt, amongst others, has explored how spiritual patronage intersects with political

⁶⁴ Julian Haseldine, 'Introduction', in *Friendship in Medieval Europe*, ed. Julian Haseldine (Stroud, 1999), pp. xvii–xxiii, p. xix.

projects and agendas within the eighth-century Latin text, as well as the role of literary and political patronage (or appeals to that support) surrounding the text's production. Dedicated to Ælfwald, King of East Anglia, Felix's *Vita* nevertheless features prominently King Æthelbald of Mercia, who visits Guthlac for advice and guidance whilst in exile (c. 709–16), and who was probably 'exercising overlordship in East Anglia' at the time of the text's composition.⁶⁵ Felix's *Vita S. Guthlaci* writes itself into the narrative of the rising hegemony of Mercia, focusing on Mercian locations and Guthlac's patronage of followers from across the Mercian kingdom – including, most importantly, the saint's support of Æthelbald's claims as future king. Cubitt comments that Felix's *Vita* is unusual amongst early hagiography in that it was

written not apparently for a monastic community but for a king. It does include didactic material suitable for a monastic audience but the political impetus behind it is the key to its creation. Guthlac was a saint created for political needs by the manipulation of textual sources.⁶⁶

Patronage features as a recurrent motif throughout Felix's *Vita*, yet Guthlac's counsel, support and prophetic words to his visitors at Crowland seem to serve primarily political purposes. The saint's words to the exiled Æthelbald, in Chapter XLIX, for example, urge him to 'ideo confortare, quia Dominus auditor tuus est' ('be strong, for the Lord is your helper'), appropriating the universal didactic language of the Psalms (27:7), yet in fact deploying it for very specific political ends.⁶⁷ In terms of its emphases and interests, *Guthlac B* presents a marked contrast: here, the emphasis is on general moral lessons and spiritual meditations rather than any direct political purpose, and the poem encourages a hermeneutic movement from the very specific patronage relationship depicted between Guthlac and Beccel towards more universalised paradigms of learning, spiritual growth and virtue and its reward.

In *Guthlac B*, the central bond between Guthlac and Beccel forms the basis of an idealised representation of spiritual patronage, adaptable as a model for a range of overlapping relationships relevant to its monastic audience such as those of teacher-pupil, master-disciple, senior-novitiate. Once again, as in *Guthlac A*, the terminology of hierarchy and rank is fused with the rhetoric of friendship and kinship, as well as affective language, presenting a multivalent relationship between the two central characters. Again, the poem balances acute attention to hierarchy and status with the suggestion that certain, privileged kinds of relationship may be able to transcend or collapse hierarchical distance. Introducing Beccel, the poem tells us that

Hine wunade mid
an ombehtþegn, se hine æghwylce
daga neosade. Ongan ða deophydig,

⁶⁵ Catherine Cubitt, 'Memory and narrative in the cult of early Anglo-Saxon saints', in *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 29–66, pp. 50–51.

⁶⁶ Cubitt, 'Memory and narrative', p. 51.

⁶⁷ *Life of Saint Guthlac*, Chapter XLIX, pp. 150, 151.

gleawmod gongan to godes temple,
 þær he eþelbodan inne wiste,
 þone leofstan lareow gecorene,
 ond þa in eode eadgum to spræce,
 wolde hyrcnigan halges lara,
 mildes meþelcwida.

There remained with him [Guthlac] one servant who visited him every day. Then he, that deeply thoughtful and prudent man, set out for the church of God, in which he knew the prophet of the heavenly home, the dearest and most precious teacher, would be, and then went in to speak to the blessed man – he wanted to hear the teachings of the holy man, the speech of the gentle one.

Hierarchy is very clear here, with Beccel described as the saint's 'ombehtþegn' ('servant, attendant') and Guthlac as 'lareow', teaching his pupil. But the relationship between Guthlac and Beccel is also grounded from the start in affective language, with Guthlac as 'leofstan' ('dearest, most beloved'). The saint's devotion to his disciple is also described – in positive terms – as an act of condescension in which this senior spiritual figure attends to the needs of his junior: Guthlac is 'milde' ('the gentle one', 'the merciful one'), suggesting his generosity and kindness despite his spiritual superiority. Throughout the poem, Beccel's terms of address to Guthlac reflect this duality in their relationship: Guthlac is both his superior within a clearly-delineated spiritual hierarchy, and also an intimate friend. For example, in lines 1011b–12a Beccel addresses Guthlac as 'winedryhten min, / fæder, freonda hleo' ('my friend and lord, father, refuge of your friends'), at line 1014a as 'þeoden leofesta' ('most beloved lord') and at line 1021b as 'freodryhten' ('noble lord'), the steady accretion of epithets shaping the saint's dual role as master and companion, with the compound 'winedryhten' even assimilating these twin identities into a single word. Of course, the term *winedryhten*, and the notion that a warrior should experience an affective bond with his lord, are familiar to Old English heroic poetry.⁶⁸ At the end of *Beowulf*, for example, as the Geats mourn their dead king, the poem tells us in gnomic terms that

swa hit gedefe bið
 þæt mon his winedryhten wordum herge,
 ferhðum freoge, þonne he forð scile
 of lichaman læded weorðan.

thus it is fitting that a man should praise his friend and lord, love him in his spirit, when he must be led forth from the mortal body (lines 3174b–77).

In *Guthlac B* this double identity of the lord as both master and friend becomes the thematic centre of the poem, underpinning its representation of spiritual patronage and inter-relationship throughout.

⁶⁸ The ideas – and tensions – inherent in this compound, familiar in Old English heroic poetry, will be discussed later in this chapter. See below, p. 42.

Guthlac's own words indicate that he reciprocates the intense affective bond shown by Beccel. He addresses Beccel as 'leofe bearn' ('beloved son', line 1076b) and 'swæse bearn' ('dear son', line 1080b), casting himself as spiritual father. This adoptive father-son relationship, again recalling Germanic practices of fostering as well as Christian baptismal traditions, itself implies a clear hierarchy between Guthlac and Beccel. Yet it also admits Beccel into a privileged, intimate relationship – with the expectation of special support and protection – which extends beyond what is simply his rightful expectation within a strict spiritual (and indeed secular, since Guthlac is a Mercian nobleman) hierarchy. Similarly, Beccel is described as Guthlac's 'wine leofestan' ('most beloved friend', line 1063a), again casting the their relationship in terms of affect and emotion. Guthlac's bond with Beccel is articulated most clearly in the saint's words to his disciple as he approaches death.

'Min þæt swæse bearn, nis nu swiþe feor
 þam ytemestan endedogor
 nydgedales, þæt ðu þa nyhstan scealt
 in woruldlife worda minra,
 næfre leana biloren, lare gehyran,
 noht longe ofer þis. Læst ealle well
 wære ond winescype, word þa wit spræcon,
 leofast manna.' 'Næfre ic lufan sibbe,
 þeoden, æt þearfe, þine forlæte
 asanian.'

'My dear son, it is not very far now from the utmost and final day of the enforced parting, so that not long after this you must hear the last teaching by my words, never lacking in their reward, in this worldly life. Acquit well all the alliance and friendship, the words which we too have spoken together, most beloved of men.' 'Lord, never at your time of need shall I let the kinship of love grow weak' (lines 1166–1175).

Affective language pervades this passage, with Beccel's answer to his master forming a symmetry in their close relationship of 'sibbe'. Whilst Beccel addresses Guthlac as 'þeoden', these lines are dominated by language of artificial kinship and friendship which joins the two men in a privileged and intimate bond. Most strikingly, Guthlac uses the Old English dual pronoun (*wit*) to refer to himself and Beccel, indicating a special kind of close, inalienable union between the two. Guthlac's speech here resonates with one of the key themes foregrounded earlier, in the Prologue to *Guthlac A*, reminding Beccel that his wise words as spiritual patron always bring a 'lean' ('reward'). This implicit economic model extends into his final instruction to Beccel, urging him to 'læst ... well' ('acquit ... well') the bond they have developed. Guthlac's patronage of Beccel demands reciprocation in the future: it must be repaid with continued service and devotion. The intense affective bond between the two men is nevertheless grounded on clear expectations of mutual obligation and reciprocity, as we might expect from a relationship articulated in the familiar terms of kin and friendship.

The intimate relationship between the saint and his follower is perhaps most evident in Beccel's expressions of grief at Guthlac's impending death, and Guthlac's words of consolation to his disciple. For Beccel, this is a time of 'wop ond heaf' ('weeping and lamentation', line 1047b), his mind 'miclum gebisgad, / þream forþrycced' ('greatly afflicted, cruelly oppressed', lines 1197b–98a). Guthlac offers him comfort, 'leof mon leofum' ('beloved man to beloved man', line 1164a), promising that

'..nu ic for lufan þinre,
 ond geferscype þæt wit fyrn mid unc
 longe læstan, nelle ic lætan þe
 æfre unrotne æfter ealdorlege
 meðne modseocne minre geweorðan,
 soden sorgwælmum. A ic sibbe wiþ þe
 healdan wille'

'now, for love of you and because of the fellowship we too have from long ago always sustained between us, I will not abandon you for ever after my death to become sad, weary, sick at heart and overwhelmed with waves of grief. I will always keep friendship with you' (lines 1257b–63a).

This speech reflects the continuing bond of affectivity and mutual obligation, expressed here in terms of 'sibbe' ('friendship' or 'kinship') which will be sustained even after Guthlac's death. The discourse of intense feeling associated with Guthlac's final illness transcends the conventional language and protocols of hierarchy, joining the saint and his disciple (again indicated by the prominent use of dual pronouns here) in a unique, privileged bond.

The exceptional prevalence of this language of affect and emotion, used to express the relationship between Guthlac and Beccel in *Guthlac B*, has been recognised by several scholars, provoking some interesting critical reactions. Zacharias Thundy aligns the relationship with 'the Christian camaraderie of the soldiers of Christ and the spiritual friendship of the master and his disciple found in the medieval monastic communities',⁶⁹ yet the intensity of the poetic language also seems to generate an anxiety in his reading. He asserts that

there is no poetic reference to any overt homosexuality in the love-relationship between Guthlac and Beccel. The poet removes even covert homosexuality from Guthlac's life by making the saint reveal the identity of his mysterious nocturnal visitor ...⁷⁰

Later Thundy insists again that the author of *Guthlac B* 'did not think that friendship among monks was unholy and necessarily homosexual',⁷¹ again rather heavily-handedly imposing a modern concept of homosexuality – and evidently his own

⁶⁹ Zacharias P. Thundy, 'St Guthlac and Spiritual Friendship', *American Benedictine Review* 36 (1985), 142–58, p. 143.

⁷⁰ Thundy, 'St Guthlac and Spiritual Friendship', p. 147.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

associated concerns – onto the intimate homosocial relationship depicted in the Old English poem.⁷² It is also worth noting that, whilst the relationship between Guthlac and Beccel certainly forms the emotive centre of the poem, Guthlac also uses strongly affective language to describe his bond with his sister, Pega, from whom he is separated in earthly life, looking ahead to heaven where ‘sceal lufu uncer / wærfæst wunian’ (‘our love together shall be enduring’, lines 1189b–90a) and ‘wit wilna a / in ðære beorhtan byrig brucan motun’ (‘we two will always be able to enjoy our desires’, lines 1190b–91). The affective idiom of *Guthlac B* provokes a similar self-consciousness about gender, language and sexuality in the interpretation by Santha Bhattacharji, who characterises the poem’s style as an emergent ‘feminized discourse’ which prefigures the monastic rhetoric of the twelfth century.⁷³ Whilst both of these readings do offer some valid insights, it is important to balance interest in the poem’s presentation of the affective elements in the bond between Guthlac and Beccel – and, indeed, our modern assumptions about sexuality and gender – with recognition of the formal, legalistic obligations which underpin their relationship. As with the patronage relationship between Bartholomew and Guthlac in *Guthlac A*, the relationship between the saint and Beccel in *Guthlac B* is grounded, as we have seen, on expectations of mutual obligation, inter-dependence and reciprocity, binding both men into a continuing economy of service and support. Again, in *Guthlac B*, the structuring framework of social and spiritual hierarchy is ever present. As Daniel Calder comments, the poet

exaggerates... the distance between the saintly hermit and his servant past all point of comparison with the Latin. Beccel serves the saint, but Guthlac serves God. This hierarchy expressly points out the abyss that lies between the ordinary man and sanctity, for Beccel does not, nor will he ever, grasp the meaning of the mystical transfiguration that will occur in his presence.⁷⁴

Yet, despite the ‘abyss’ between these two individuals in the spiritual hierarchy, the language of affect, friendship and kinship which is used to articulate their relationship in *Guthlac B* enables Guthlac’s saintly patronage (and, indeed, Beccel’s love and service) to reach across this space and draw the two men together.

As we have seen, spiritual relationships in the two Guthlac poems are firmly grounded on an ideology of reciprocity, symmetry and mutual obligation, in which both patron and follower must maintain their appropriate roles and are rewarded for their fidelity. It is this model of reciprocity and economy which works across hierarchical distance (the ‘abyss’, in Calder’s terms) to apparently transcend the expected segregations of rank and authority. As discussed earlier in this chapter, alongside an emphasis on hierarchy, rank and gradation, an interest in concepts of economy, reckoning, earning and reward is set up from the very beginning of *Guthlac*

⁷² For more nuanced readings of homosocial relationships in Anglo-Saxon literature, see David Clark, *Between Medieval Men: Male Friendship and Desire* (Oxford, 2009), and Allen J. Frantzen, *Before the Closet: Same-Sex Love from Beowulf to Angels in America* (Chicago, 1998).

⁷³ Santha Bhattacharji, ‘*Guthlac A* and *Guthlac B*: Changing Metaphors’, in *Anchorites, Wombs and Tombs*, ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy and Mari Hughes-Edwards (Cardiff, 2005), pp. 41–53, p. 51.

⁷⁴ Calder, ‘Theme and Strategy in *Guthlac B*’, p. 237.

A (in the Prologue section), thus influencing the reader's attention and interpretation across the two Exeter Book *Guthlac* poems. The Prologue to *Guthlac A* presents a 'transactional' model of spirituality based on gift, exchange and reciprocity, providing an important ideology within which to read and understand patronage relationships across the two poems. Our readings of the relationships between Guthlac and Bartholomew, and Guthlac and Beccel in *Guthlac A* and *B* have so far confirmed the importance of reciprocity and economy as underlying models throughout the texts, but the presence and significance of this theme extends beyond these specific portrayals. After the Prologue to *Guthlac A*, the angel and demon who battle over Guthlac's soul offer him the prospect of different kinds of gain: the angel, the 'dæda lean' ('reward for deeds', line 123b) offered by God in heaven; the devil, the temptation of worldly gain and 'reaf' ('loot', line 132a), like that stolen by criminals. Later, after showing Guthlac's sufferings in his retreat, the poem tells us that God rewards his endurance.

Da wæs agongen þæt him god wolde
 æfter þrowinga þonc gegyldan
 þæt he martyrhad mode gelufade,
 sealde him snyttru on sefan gehygdum,
 mægenfæste gemynd.

The time had arrived when God wished to pay him thanks after his sufferings, because he had loved with martyrdom with his spirit, he gave him wisdom in his heart's thoughts and strong mind (lines 470–74a).

God's action is depicted explicitly as reciprocation or recompense for Guthlac's virtuous suffering, the verb *sellan* ('to give') recalling the protocols of gift exchange and *gyldan* ('to pay') even suggesting the terms of a commercial transaction. Yet God's gifts to Guthlac are not material; instead, they form the enduring spiritual rewards which will support the saint in his hermitage and equip him for heaven. Indeed, towards the end of *Guthlac A*, Guthlac is ranked amongst those virtuous men who 'earniað on eorðan ecan lifes' ('earn on earth eternal life', line 795), underlining the model of spiritual economy which supports the poem's account of Guthlac's life. In *Guthlac B*, also, the concept of earning and reciprocation is central: Guthlac 'sigorlean sohtun' ('sought the reward of victory', line 878a), and the saint tells Beccel that, after death

 '...ic siþþan mot
 fore meotudes cneowum meorda hleotan,
 gingra geafena.'

'...I afterwards will be allowed to gain rewards of new gifts before the knees of the creator' (lines 1040b–42a).

Daniel Calder suggests that the thematic basis of *Guthlac B* is the contrast between the 'reward' for Adam's 'ærgewyrht' (line 1079b) – his 'earlier deed', which led to the

Fall – and the reward for Guthlac’s deeds which will ensure the restoration of paradise, at least for the saint.⁷⁵ Language and metaphors of economy and reciprocity extend through both of the Exeter Book Guthlac poems, shaping the reader’s understanding of relationships amongst mankind, and between the human and the divine, across the texts.

Whilst the word *lean* (‘reward’) is used frequently across both of the Guthlac poems, the texts also exploit the opportunity to play on the Old English term *lac*, the second element in the saint’s name, with a semantic range, as noted above, including ‘gift’, ‘offering’, ‘sacrifice’, ‘reward’, ‘exchange’ and ‘play’. Thus the texts participate in an established medieval tradition of exploring the meaning inherent in names, and their possible didactic uses.⁷⁶ After the initial occurrence of *lac* in the Prologue to *Guthlac A*, describing the alms given by virtuous men to those who own less, Guthlac himself declares his own plan:

‘... minum Criste cweman þence
leofran lace.’

‘...I intend to please my Christ with a more precious gift’ (lines 306–7a).

The use of *lac* is even more prominent in *Guthlac B*, perhaps prompted by the text’s use of Felix, who himself analyses the form and meaning of Guthlac’s name. The poem extends the semantic range and potential metaphorical applications of *lac*, playing with ‘peripheral meanings’ of the term to ‘amplify the connotations of the saint’s name’.⁷⁷ At lines 1033b–34, the approach of death is imagined in terms of a battle: ‘Wiga nealæcceð, / unlæt laces’ (‘The warrior approaches, not slow to the fray’), the figurative associations of *lac* as a martial ‘exchange’ or ‘play’ resonating here. At the celebration of Easter before his death, Guthlac ‘lac onsægde’ (‘made the offering’, line 111b) to God, the term *lac* again combining in its semantic and metaphorical range the nature of the Eucharist as both Christ’s sacrifice and a gift of human service. The final two uses of *lac*, relating to news brought to Pega concerning her brother’s death, are usually translated as ‘message’ (lines 1298a, 1342a), though the poem seems deliberately to play with the paradox inherent in the meaning ‘gift’. The ‘gift’ of the painful news of Guthlac’s death is both ironic, bringing misery rather than joy, yet also, in spiritual terms, a genuine boon and source of gladness through its completion of Guthlac’s saintly life and instigation of the continuing legacy which he will leave. Sally Mussetter comments on the way in which use of the term *lac* unites three key moments in the text, underscoring their inter-relationship and inter-dependency.

In past, present, and future the gifts of nature, grace and glory guarantee the defeat of the foe who attacks ‘unlæt laces’, demand the moral commitment of

⁷⁵ Calder, ‘Theme and Strategy in *Guthlac B*’, pp. 234–35.

⁷⁶ See W.F. Bolton, ‘The Background and Meaning of *Guthlac*’, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 61 (1962), 595–603, pp. 596–97; Mussetter, ‘Type as Prophet’, pp. 43–44, 50.

⁷⁷ Bolton, ‘The Background and Meaning of *Guthlac*’, pp. 600, 601.

the Easter 'lac', and authenticate the 'lac' which the visionary sends to console the living.⁷⁸

Generated through meditation on the meanings of Guthlac's name, uses of *lac* throughout the Exeter Book Guthlac poems foreground key concepts of gift, exchange and reciprocity, which tie together individuals and events within a Christian spiritual framework.

In the two Guthlac poems, the symmetries and networks of inter-connection suggested by *lac* and *lacan* evoke the visual intertwinings and knotwork of Anglo-Saxon interlace design. John Leyerle's seminal article on 'The Interlace Structure of *Beowulf*' played an important role in establishing the recognition that certain stylistic features and structural principles are shared by Anglo-Saxon visual art and literature, with the 'braid', 'lacertine interlace' or 'woven' feature as a recurrent element.⁷⁹ These aesthetic conventions have been characterised in similar ways by Adeline Courtney Barrett, who imagines Old English literature as a 'tapestry', and by Pauline E. Head, who argues that

Verbal and visual Anglo-Saxon texts share a predominance of ornamentation, an elaboration of structure, which indicates that their form is not subordinate to and separable from their meaning. Ornament semantically overlaps with and touches narrative or figural representation in the same way that the interlace, geometric pattern, or acanthus design of a manuscript border visually extends into the image it adorns.⁸⁰

Focusing in particular on the zoomorphic elements often found in Anglo-Saxon visual knotwork designs, Andrew Patenall also emphasises that interlace should be understood as a 'perceptual mode' in Anglo-Saxon culture, which extends beyond mere decoration and adornment to shape cognitive and hermeneutic processes.⁸¹ The centrality of an interlace aesthetic to Old English poetry has been examined by a range of scholars including Leyerle himself: the *locus classicus* for identifying this mode is *Beowulf*, line 874a, when Hrothgar's *scop* composes a poem in honour of Beowulf, 'wordum wrixlan' ('exchanging with words'). The verb *wrixlan*, with its suggestions of the structural inter-weavings of theme, alliteration and poetic metre, is also used to describe the act of singing at line 127 of *The Phoenix* and, as noted above, the verb *lacan* similarly articulates the process of playing with or exchanging words in the Exeter Book riddle 31.⁸² The aesthetic principle and conceptual idiom of interlace works against naturalistic and linear structures, enabling Old English

⁷⁸ Mussetter, 'Type as Prophet', p. 54.

⁷⁹ Leyerle, 'The Interlace Structure of *Beowulf*'. See also Richard A. Lewis, 'Old English Poetry: Alliteration and Structural Interlace', *Language and Style* 6 (1973), 196–205 and Peter R. Schroeder, 'Stylistic Analogies between Old English Art and Poetry', *Viator* 5 (1974), 185–98, both of which build on Leyerle's work.

⁸⁰ Head, *Representation and Design*, p. 115.

⁸¹ Andrew J.G. Patenall, 'The Image of the Worm: Some Literary Implications of Serpentine Decoration', in *The Anglo-Saxons. Synthesis and Achievement*, ed. J. Douglas Woods and David A.E. Pelteret (Waterloo, Ontario, 1985), pp. 105–16, p. 105.

⁸² See N. Blake, ed., *The Phoenix* (Exeter, 1990), line 127, p. 52, and discussion above, p. 13.

verse (as shown in Leyerle's analysis of *Beowulf*) to inter-connect disparate narratives, characters and historical moments based on thematic association.

An understanding of interlace structure is clearly essential for interpretation of the Exeter Book Guthlac poems themselves, helping to explain the apparent jumps (especially in *Guthlac A*) between specific and universal, homiletic and hagiographic modes, even secular heroic and Christian, as the text weaves together associations from a range of sources and textual traditions. Daniel Calder sees the non-linearity of *Guthlac B* as a central characteristic which differentiates the poem from Felix's Latin *Vita*, commenting that the poet

... seems attracted to the undeveloped pattern inherent in Felix's biography. While Felix's method is concise and strictly chronological, the Old English poet's strategy meticulously draws out the full thematic implications latent in the saint's history and universalizes our perception of Guthlac.⁸³

Again, we see in *Guthlac B* the typical Anglo-Saxon impetus towards patterning and interlace, transforming Felix's conventionally linear Latin *Vita* into a poem which entwines together selective elements from the saint's life with their wider implications and associations.

Beyond its importance for the appreciation of structure and style in the Exeter Book Guthlac poems, the model of interlace provides a framework which can enable us to conceptualise and visualise, metaphorically, the presentations of power and inter-relationship within the two texts. *Guthlac A* and *Guthlac B* present spiritual relationships as part of a network of inter-dependencies, in which individuals are linked together by economies of reciprocity, mutual obligation and the symbolic exchange of gifts. As demonstrated in Bartholomew's speech to the devils in *Guthlac A*, the characters in these poems are inter-dependent, their identities shaped through their relationships and interactions with each other, binding together God, his apostle and the saint on earth – as well as the saint's own disciples, as shown in the sequential move to *Guthlac B*. Across the two poems, the recurrent references to reciprocity, exchange and reward form metaphorical braids and symmetries which parallel the visual forms of Anglo-Saxon interlace. However, whilst interlace seemingly provides a neat visual metaphor for the inter-dependent spiritual relationships depicted in *Guthlac A* and *B*, a closer analysis of the mechanics of interlace design allows us to recognise some potential paradoxes and tensions within this visual mode, challenging us to acknowledge and question some of the ambivalences inherent in the representation of patronage in the two poems. This is where the model of interlace, with its double way of seeing patterns of relationship, is particularly illuminating.

Different theories surround the nature of interlace in Anglo-Saxon visual and material culture: recent scholars have advanced a variety of arguments about the diachronic evolution of this aesthetic as well as the techniques involved in the

⁸³ Calder, 'Theme and Strategy', p. 235.

practical construction of these designs in early medieval England.⁸⁴ Yet analysis of the construction of interlace designs in Anglo-Saxon manuscript art seems to indicate that the curvilinear elements of the knotwork were conventionally built over a system of points and grids. R.L.S. Bruce-Mitford, for example, examining the Lindisfarne Gospels, demonstrates that on the reverse of folios 26v, 139r and 210v there are traces of a square grid marked out in dry point, and on the reverse of folio 2v there are small dots along the edge of the pattern which signal the use of a foundational grid structure.⁸⁵ Based on this analysis, he argues that insular interlace design is 'far more bound by geometry' than some earlier commentators allowed, founded on a system of 'grids', 'sub-divisions' or 'compartments'.⁸⁶ Developing this work, Gwenda Adcock has shown how these structural principles extend to other Anglo-Saxon manuscripts and, in some cases, to stone sculpture.⁸⁷ Thus, two formal and conceptual modes exist simultaneously in interlace design: the rigid geometric system of grids and points, which orders space according to precise distinctions and divisions; and the (apparently) more fluid, curvilinear bands of the knotwork themselves, which seem to the observer to flow freely in their braids and symmetries. Bruce-Mitford himself imagines this structural balance between strict geometry and flowing connective lines in terms of 'compromise', even, his analysis hints, a kind of paradox.⁸⁸ This duality might perhaps form a new way of thinking about the tensions and ambivalences inherent in the representations of spiritual power and inter-relationship in the Exeter Book Guthlac poems, in particular the recurrent inter-play between strict structures of hierarchical order and more fluid models of inter-connection, economy and reciprocity across the texts. Anglo-Saxon interlace provides a visual and spatial metaphor for these ambivalent systems of relationship, which simultaneously imply distance and proximity, separation and connection, segregation and affiliation.

Throughout this discussion, I have drawn on spatial metaphors to express the system of spiritual hierarchy, with its strict placing of rank and gradation, presented so emphatically in the Guthlac poems. I have suggested that, within this structure, individuals of different status are separated by the 'space' or 'distance' of hierarchical distinction, recalling Daniel Calder's more extreme terminology of the 'abyss' which sunders those at different spiritual levels. Yet, as we have seen, spiritual patronage – with its associated discourses of affect, friendship and artificial kinship – seems able to reach across the points within the metaphorical space of hierarchy, drawing together

⁸⁴ See for example the entry discussing the 'Grammar of Anglo-Saxon Ornament', *CASSS*. Recent theoretical work includes *Theorizing Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture*, ed. Catherine E. Karkov and Fred Orton (Morgantown, 2003) and Fred Orton, 'Rethinking the Ruthwell Monument: Fragments and Critique; Tradition and History; Tongues and Sockets', *Art History* 21 (2003), 65–106.

⁸⁵ R.L.S. Bruce-Mitford, 'The Methods of Construction of the Insular Ornament', in *Evangelium Quattuor Codex Lindisfarnensis*, ed. T.D. Kendrick *et al.*, 2 vols (Olten and Lausanne, 1960), vol. 2, part IV, pp. 221–31, p. 226.

⁸⁶ Bruce-Mitford, 'The Methods of Construction', pp. 231, 225–26.

⁸⁷ Gwenda Adcock, 'A study of the types of interlace on Northumbrian sculpture' (unpubl. PhD thesis, University of Durham, 1974).

⁸⁸ Bruce-Mitford, 'The Methods of Construction', p. 231.

individuals of different status into a inter-connected, inter-dependent knotwork of reciprocity and symmetry. These privileged spiritual relationships might, perhaps, be aligned metaphorically with the apparently fluid ribbons of visual interlace design, which collapse geometric distance into one single image of inter-connection and unity – yet which are built, fundamentally, on a system of meticulous order, placing and division. If we are to accept the usefulness of this interpretative metaphor, then another question follows: do the fluid inter-connecting bands of visual interlace truly transcend the rigidity of geometric division and separation? Or does interlace design merely create the illusion of free-flowing inter-connecting strands, whilst a rigid locational order still forms its uncompromising basis?

The use of visual interlace as a metaphor for patterns of relationship in the Guthlac poems generates challenging questions concerning ambivalence, paradox and simultaneity. The poems employ discourses of affectivity, friendship and artificial kinship alongside models of strictly vertical power and authority, apparently sustaining a double way of seeing relationships between individuals. Yet do these particular kinds of language genuinely collapse hierarchical order, transcending difference and distance, or do they merely euphemise hierarchy and provide an expedient rhetoric for disguising the workings of vertical power, authority and control? This question might centre on Beccel's use of 'winedryhten' in *Guthlac B* – a term comfortably familiar from conventional Old English poetic diction, yet which packs into the compound two distinct concepts and social roles: the friend and lord. Manuela Romano Mozo's study of the semantics of Old English 'friendship' vocabulary and the conditions of usage of *freond* and *wine* notes that *wine* 'has a more restricted distribution and functions', occurring characteristically as a vocative (as in 'winedryhten min', line 1011b) in addresses and appeals to individuals.⁸⁹ Mozo suggests that *wine* has a 'decorative function' and is expressive of the relationship 'between warriors and their social "betters", and specifically between retainers and their lords'.⁹⁰ In Old English poetic usage, then, the term *wine* might suggest aspiration and desire; a political motivation to disguise and deflect the normal structures of hierarchy for personal advantage. In *Guthlac B* the compound *winedryhten* is transposed from the secular heroic context to articulate the relationship between the disciple Beccel and his spiritual patron. Yet does the intense relationship of friendship, affect and 'sibbe' which characterises their interaction in the poem genuinely transcend the distances and distinctions of social and spiritual hierarchy? Or is this discourse instead simply euphemistic and evasive, constructing a linguistic veneer of intimacy, reciprocity and mutual co-operation over the ever-present workings of vertical, hierarchical power?

For audiences in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, the Guthlac poems of the Exeter Book present a range of monastic concerns and values, engaging with the renewed emphasis on Benedictinism in the period. Beginning with the specific

⁸⁹ Manuela Romano Mozo, 'A Semantic Approach to Old English "friendship"', in *Papers from the IVth International Conference of the Spanish Society for Medieval Language and Literature*, ed. Teresa Fanego Lema (Santiago de Compostela, 1993), pp. 265–72, pp. 269, 270.

⁹⁰ Mozo, 'A Semantic Approach to Old English "friendship"', p. 270.

example of Guthlac, both poems move out to more universal themes and didactic messages, inter-weaving narrative elements from the saint's life with metaphorical and homiletic associations. The texts reflect a meticulous attention to the very monastic issues of hierarchy, rank and gradation, established from the outset in the Prologue to *Guthlac A* and its allusion to sources such as the *Regula S. Benedicti* and Smaragdus's *Expositio*. The poems' presentation of spiritual inter-relationship and patronage is grounded firmly within this framework of hierarchy, as we might expect of texts which promote a monastic vision of community, in which the more junior members should be inspired, taught and corrected by 'ealdres egsa' ('fear of a superior', line 420). Yet within this strict hierarchical order, more privileged, exceptional relationships are also imagined as possible, expressed in *Guthlac A* and *B* through the language of affectivity, friendship and adoptive kinship. These special connections appear to transcend the usual divisions of hierarchy and rank and admit individuals into intimate, advantageous personal bonds based on reciprocity and mutual obligation. The discourses used in these contexts recall the formal Anglo-Saxon language of friendship and kinship, with its legal implications, as well as Germanic traditions of fostering and the Christian practice of extended kinship through baptism. Yet the concept of spiritual patronage which exceeds all the expectations of rank and hierarchical order also clearly intersects with the Christian concept of grace: despite all the emphasis in these poems on earning, reward and recompense, the support of a powerful protector (whether heavenly or earthly) seems to go beyond what is simply merited or deserved and collapses the norms of human reckoning. Thus, the Guthlac poems appear simultaneously to represent a strictly hierarchical, rational, social and spiritual order alongside the unique capacity of spiritual patronage to transcend this. I have argued that analogy with the ambivalences and structural ambiguities of Anglo-Saxon visual interlace enables us to interrogate this apparent duality more vigorously. Indeed, the metaphor of visual interlace design can sharpen our attention to several key questions regarding power, hierarchy and economy in the Guthlac poems. Does spiritual patronage as represented in the Guthlac poems genuinely collapse hierarchical distance, connecting disparate points together in a single fluid knotwork of reciprocity and symmetry? Or do the poems instead present a carefully-constructed rhetorical illusion which is merely crafted over the underlying structure of rigid order, rank and division? My analysis of these poems begins to suggest the special ways in which texts might be able to sustain contradictory ideas or ambivalent models, serving the complex needs of their readers and cultural communities.

Sites of Economy: Power and Reckoning in the Poetic Epitaphs of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle

What is an epitaph? Whilst agreeing on its ‘complicated generic status’, which evolves and adapts across historical periods and contexts,¹ a number of recent studies have advanced arguments for defining the epitaph as a literary form and identifying its key elements. Scott Newstok, in his study of epitaphic writing in early modern England, suggests that the ‘here-ness’ of the epitaph is central, its ‘locative declaration’ forming the ‘core statement’ of all writing within the tradition, whether inscribed on the tomb itself or ‘re-cited and re-sited’ in other literary contexts.² Joshua Scodel regards brevity and ‘economy’ as major features of the epitaph, stemming from its origins in inscriptions on stone but continuing as the genre develops into a literary genre in its own right.³ The *Encyclopaedia of the Middle Ages* also traces the epitaph’s movement from literal inscription upon the tomb to an ‘autonomous’ literary genre, with verse epitaphs in particular ‘more frequently found transcribed in manuscripts than actually engraved’.⁴ For Anne Carson, examining the origins of the epitaphic tradition in the work of Simonides of Keos alongside modern interpretations in twentieth-century poetry, the dynamics of exchange and reciprocity are fundamental. She argues that what the early classical epitaph ‘contribute[s] to our style of thinking and talking about death is a central shaping metaphor: the metaphor of exchange’.⁵ The reader plays a pivotal role in the series of interpretative and moral transactions initiated by the epitaph text: in the classical period the inscription seeks to ‘guarantee a future exchange of oblivion for memory and purchase a moment of life’ through

¹ Scott L. Newstok, *Quoting Death in Early Modern England: The Poetics of Epitaphs Beyond the Tomb* (Basingstoke, 2009), p. 34.

² Newstok, *Quoting Death*, pp. 1, 34, 4.

³ Joshua Scodel, *The English Poetic Epitaph: Commemoration and Conflict from Jonson to Wordsworth* (Ithaca, 1991), pp. 2–3.

⁴ *Encyclopaedia of the Middle Ages*, ed. André Vauchez et al., 2 vols, (Cambridge, 2000), vol. 1, p. 492.

⁵ Anne Carson, *Economy of the Unlost (Reading Simonides of Keos with Paul Celan)* (Princeton, 1999), p. 74.

the reader's attention.⁶ In Christian epitaphic tradition, the reader is asked, whether explicitly or implicitly, for remembrance, reckoning and prayer.⁷

This chapter will be an experiment in reading the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's poetic passages on the deaths of rulers as epitaphs, with close attention to the conventions and expectations generated by that particular literary and cultural tradition. The discussion will focus especially on the passages relating to King Edgar, including the verse of 975ABC (*The Death of Edgar*) as well as 973ABC (*The Coronation of Edgar*), which immediately precedes it in these manuscripts and with which it is usually read.⁸ I will also examine the different poem for 975 in the 'northern recension' manuscripts D and E, and the 'Wulfstanian' additions to 959DE and 975D. Before looking specifically at these 'Edgar' passages, my understanding of epitaphic writing in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle will be shaped and supported by an overview and analysis of the other potential examples located in 979DE, 1036CD, 1065CD and 1086E. I will suggest how reading these passages as epitaphs might help to resolve interpretative problems which have arisen – or aspects of the texts which have been neglected or avoided – due to their conventional generic categorisation as eulogy, panegyric or laudatory verse. Established in the canonical Anglo-Saxon scholarship of the mid-twentieth century,⁹ this assumption that the Chronicle poems on the deaths of rulers must belong to the genre of encomium (or, as in the case of the 1086 verses on the death of William the Conqueror, represent a conspicuous inversion or failure of this model) has received relatively little re-appraisal or modification in recent studies.¹⁰ Whilst the term 'epitaph' is used by Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe to refer to the poetic passages on the deaths of kings in the late Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, she pairs it with 'praise poem', suggesting a similar generic function, and the implications of her apparent definition are never explored.¹¹ As this discussion will show, the hermeneutic framework of the epitaph foregrounds new aspects of these Old English texts, offering new perspectives on the work they do within the Chronicle and for contemporary readers.

⁶ Carson, *Economy of the Unlost*, p. 78.

⁷ *Encyclopaedia of the Middle Ages*, ed. Vauchez et al., p. 492; Günter Bernt, *Das lateinische Epigramm im Übergang von der Spätantike zum frühen Mittelalter* (Munich, 1968), p. 9.

⁸ Throughout this chapter I follow the established convention of indicating the various manuscripts of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle which contain each specific passage by letter(s) after the annal number. For a concise overview of the different manuscripts (or fragments) of the Chronicle and their conventional designation as A–H, see Thomas A. Bredehoft, *Textual Histories: Readings in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Toronto, 2001), pp. 4–6.

⁹ For example, C.L. Wrenn suggests that the group of the tenth-century poems in the Chronicle 'may be thought of as belonging to the genre of panegyric'; Alistair Campbell regards them as 'panegyrics upon royal persons'. See C.L. Wrenn, *A Study of Old English Literature* (London, 1967), p. 182; and *The Battle of Brunanburh*, ed. A. Campbell (London, 1938), p. 38.

¹⁰ Jayne Carroll's article, 'Engla Waldend, Rex Admirabilis: Poetic Representations of King Edgar', *Review of English Studies* 58 (2007), 113–32, is a notable exception. Her readings will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

¹¹ Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'Deaths and Transformations: Thinking through the "End" of Old English Verse', in *New Directions in Oral Theory*, ed. Mark C. Amodio (Tempe, Arizona, 2005), pp. 149–78, p. 172.

Before moving to a reading of these passages in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, this discussion will begin by establishing a critical context for my analysis of epitaphic writing. The chapter begins with further investigation of what constitutes or characterises a poetic epitaph, and an exploration of the epitaphic tradition in the early Middle Ages, with particular reference to Anglo-Saxon England. I will then move on to a fuller discussion of the identified passages in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, giving an overview of arguments for defining them as 'poetic' and for reading them as a group, as well as previous considerations of their genre, purpose, provenance and audience. Alongside close analysis of the various texts, I will then suggest ways in which they can be identified and understood (and may well have been recognised by Anglo-Saxon audiences) as vernacular versions of epitaphic writing. Through these close readings, especially of the texts relating to Edgar, I will explore how these poetic passages engage with conventions of the epitaphic genre, asking readers to participate in processes of evaluation and reckoning as well as memorialisation and (where appropriate) prayer and praise. My analysis will demonstrate the complex dynamics of power and economy generated by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle epitaphs, which imbricate their subjects and readers in patterns of exchange, interdependence and reciprocity.

In the early Middle Ages, a range of overlapping literary genres and forms are available for the commemoration of the dead, including the epitaph, the elegy and the obit. As will become evident in later discussion within this chapter, the texts which I read as Anglo-Saxon examples of poetic epitaphs also draw on these other conventions and models, appropriating motifs and idioms from both Latin and vernacular traditions. However, I will begin by attempting a closer understanding of what constitutes the epitaph genre itself, with reference to more general scholarship as well as examples and studies which suggest its character and function in the early medieval period. The epitaph can be distinguished from the elegy as fundamentally written and textual in form and origin. Dustin Griffin observes that 'the epitaph is by etymology a *written* form, while elegy (from *legein*, "to speak") is properly spoken or sung'.¹² Scott Newstok, as already noted, regards the 'spatial gesture of the epitaph's "here"' as a further defining feature, arguing that 'this "here"-ness distinguishes the epitaph from the elegy', whether the text is inscribed upon a tomb or written in another context.¹³ Beyond these attempts at basic definition, as suggested at the start of this chapter, scholars in fields from classical to modern literary studies have also identified certain recurrent features which characterise the epitaph as a particular mode of writing. Several studies have called attention to the centrality of metaphors of exchange and reciprocity within the epitaph genre. In the classical context, Anne Carson argues that epitaphs pivot on the idea that 'human life is not a gift but a loan or debt, which will have to be paid back',¹⁴ identifying a range of further economies and exchanges implied within the genre, including those between life and death,

¹² Dustin Griffin, 'Johnson's Funeral Writings', *English Literary History* 41 (1974), 192–211, p. 195.

¹³ Newstok, *Quoting Death*, pp. 38 and 51.

¹⁴ Carson, *Economy of the Unlost*, p. 80.

present and past (and future), as well as between deceased subject, text and reader.¹⁵ To this, Joshua Scodel adds the concept of a 'reciprocal dynamic between the poetic epitaph and contemporaneous culture', demonstrating how commemoration of the dead in verse epitaphs does important work designed to 'undergird ... the reproduction of social life and its fundamental values and practices'.¹⁶ Within the systems of reciprocity and exchange constructed by the poetic epitaph, the reader's role – and responsibility – is central. Epitaphs establish a transaction in which the reader is asked to reflect upon and evaluate the life of the memorialised subject and offer in return praise, esteem and (in a Christian context) prayer. But epitaphs can also invite exacting moral judgement, prompting the reader to review the life, achievements and shortcomings of both the subject and himself.

General studies of the epitaph tradition in the earlier Middle Ages are few and agree that, in contrast with the corpus of more formulaic prose inscriptions, it is not quite so easy to define fixed rhetorical or stylistic features for the poetic genre.¹⁷ Emerging as a Christianised tradition from the fourth century, the verse epitaph soon becomes a literary genre in its own right, with examples composed specifically for manuscript transmission rather than inscription on a tomb.¹⁸ Whilst the verse epitaph is usually regarded as a Latin tradition,¹⁹ the term has been applied loosely to certain earlier medieval vernacular texts, as, for example, in the case of Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe's reference to the Chronicle poems, noted above. Indeed, the apparent lack of epitaphic writing in the early medieval vernacular may in fact be due to a previous unwillingness to look for ways in which conventions of the Latin epitaph may have been appropriated and adapted in vernacular idioms or synthesised with elements from other literary traditions. Overviews of the poetic epitaph in Latin have identified a number of prominent features which do recur across a wide range of texts, including praise of the departed,²⁰ requests for prayers and intercession,²¹ references to the duality of body and soul, and the exchange of life on earth for a better one in heaven.²² However, despite the frequent presence of these motifs, epitaphs are not always unequivocally eulogistic or laudatory. The epitaph offers the subject up for scrutiny and reckoning, mirroring at a limited, earthly level the process of divine judgement experienced by the soul after death. Epitaphs can include

¹⁵ Carson, *Economy of the Unlost*, pp. 73–95, *passim*, and especially pp. 73–78 and 85.

¹⁶ Scodel, *The English Poetic Epitaph*, pp. 2 and 1.

¹⁷ See for example Iro Kajanto, *Classical and Christian: Studies in the Latin Epitaphs of Medieval and Renaissance Rome* (Helsinki, 1980), pp. 7, 17.

¹⁸ Bernt, *Das lateinische Epigramm*, p. 9; *Encyclopaedia of the Middle Ages*, ed. Vauchez *et al.*, p. 492. Venantius Fortunatus, whose works for his patrons 'build on the simple panegyric form of the sepulchral inscription', is often examined as a key figure in the development of the poetic epitaph as a literary genre. See Chapter 1, 'Windows of Order: The Epitaph Made New', in Michael John Roberts, *The Humblest Sparrow: The Poetry of Venantius Fortunatus* (Ann Arbor, 2009), pp. 5–37, p. 37. For further discussion see Judith W. George, *Venantius Fortunatus: A Latin Poet in Merovingian Gaul* (Oxford, 1992), esp. pp. 85–105.

¹⁹ The *Encyclopaedia of the Middle Ages* remarks that epitaphs 'were hardly composed in the vernacular before the mid 13th c.'. See *Encyclopaedia of the Middle Ages*, ed. Vauchez *et al.*, p. 492.

²⁰ Kajanto, *Classical and Christian*, pp. 82–136.

²¹ Kajanto, *Classical and Christian*, pp. 77–78; Bernt, *Das lateinische Epigramm*, p. 9.

²² Kajanto, *Classical and Christian*, pp. 58–59; Bernt, *Das lateinische Epigramm*, p. 10.

references to the shortcomings, even sins, of the subject – a feature particularly common (but not exclusive) to epitaphs written in the voice of the deceased.²³ The inclusion of both positive and negative within the record of the epitaph transfers greater hermeneutic responsibility to the reader, who is asked to weigh and measure the virtues and failings of the subject, with implications both for his reciprocal response (prayer and praise may be balanced with disapprobation) and his own moral future. The reader, then, plays a dual role as recipient of these epitaphic texts, both learning from the didactic example presented by the subject, and also holding the power of reckoning and judgement over his posthumous fate.

Greater critical attention has been given to certain ‘landmark’ literary epitaphs in the early Middle Ages, several of which have very strong connections to Anglo-Saxon England. A discussion of selected examples can help us to explore further some of the conventions and key features of the early medieval epitaphic tradition, and to consider the place of the epitaph in the Anglo-Saxon imagination. The epitaph of Pope Hadrian I in Rome, attributed to Alcuin, under the patronage of Charlemagne (in whose voice the text is written),²⁴ is currently the focus of renewed scholarly interest and interdisciplinary investigation, with a substantial body of new research recently published and forthcoming. This epitaph has stood out for many commentators due to both its exceptionally high-quality craftsmanship as a material artefact and its sophisticated verse, which shows a confident knowledge of classical models.²⁵ While the Latin verses of the epitaph themselves reflect the Carolingian ideology of classical *renovatio* and assert the inheritance of ancient learning and prestige, the coloured marble which forms the monument signifies imperial authority. The apparent origin of this stone from within lands under Carolingian control, brought to Rome as a gift which displays the wealth and power of Charlemagne’s empire, further reinforces the epitaph’s function as a statement of ‘the imperial ambitions of its patron’.²⁶ The poetic epitaph incorporates many conventional features, including the idea of death as the separation of soul and body and the soul’s ascent to the ‘stars’ (‘ad astra’, line 10) as symbolic of heaven.²⁷ The epitaph also follows the model of addressing ‘Quisque legas versus’ (line 25, ‘Each one who reads the verses’) directly, asking for prayer (specifically the words of the ‘Miserere’ or Psalm 51, line 26). Metaphors of economy are prominent throughout:

²³ Bernt, *Das lateinische Epigramm*, p. 10.

²⁴ Luitpold Wallach, ‘Alcuin’s Epitaph of Hadrian I: A Study in Carolingian Epigraphy’, *The American Journal of Philology* 72 (1951), 128–44, esp. p. 139; Joanna Story *et al.*, ‘Charlemagne’s black marble: the origin of the epitaph of Pope Hadrian I’, *Papers of the British School at Rome* 73 (2005), 157–90, p. 159. For a discussion of the poetic contest which formed the background to the production of the epitaph, see Rosamond McKitterick, *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 122–23, and for further discussion, together with an image of the epitaph tablet, see Joanna Story, *Carolingian Connections: Anglo-Saxon England and Carolingian Francia, c.750–870* (London, 2003), pp. 105–10.

²⁵ Story, ‘Charlemagne’s black marble’, pp. 159–60.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

²⁷ Wallach, ‘Alcuin’s Epitaph of Hadrian I’, p. 139. Line references are to this edition. For the epitaphic convention of representing heaven through the metonyms of stars and light, see Kajanto, *Classical and Christian*, pp. 59 and 70.

Hadrian exchanges the earthly life for the heavenly and his virtue for the devout reader's intercession. The monument itself also represents a gift which reifies the relationship between the Carolingian empire and Rome, and the privileged status of Charlemagne as a ruler authorised and crowned by the pope.²⁸ Indeed, the epitaph for Hadrian I is unusual in the prominence it gives to Charlemagne as its supposed speaker. The verses commemorate the friendship and allegiance between the two men (Charlemagne addresses Hadrian as 'carissime' or 'most beloved', line 27 and 'pater', 'father', line 17), and announce that 'Nomina iungo simul titulis ... nostra' ('Now I will join together our names and titles', line 24): the names 'Hadrianus Karolus' do indeed follow in juxtaposition in the subsequent line. The epitaph to Hadrian I, then, does the work we would expect of an epitaph in using memorialisation of the dead to reinforce and reproduce social and political values and ideology – in this case the bold aspirations and claims of the Carolingian empire and emperor. Yet it is also exceptional in the prominence and centrality it grants to the specific personal exchange and inter-relationship between Charlemagne and the deceased pope.

Alcuin's own epitaph, composed by himself shortly before his death in 804,²⁹ has also received a (limited) amount of critical discussion, most notably in the edition and commentary by Luitpold Wallach. A text which formed the model for much subsequent epitaphic writing,³⁰ Alcuin's verse signals participation in the genre through use of a range of conventional features and motifs, with metaphors of exchange and economy particularly central. Written in the first-person voice of Alcuin, the epitaph begins with a direct request to the reader, imagined in conventional terms as a traveller or passer-by: 'Hic, rogo, pauxillum veniens subsiste, viator' ('Here, I beg thee, pause for a while, traveller', line 1), asking him to 'examine' ('scrutare', line 2) the words of the verse.³¹ The epitaph hinges on a contrast between the dead subject, Alcuin, and its living reader, drawing in many conventional *memento mori* motifs. The verse warns that:

Vertitur o species, ut mea, sicque tua,
Quod nunc es fueram, famosus in orbe, viator,
Et quod nunc ego sum, tuque futuris eris.

The form of thy body will be changed as was mine.
What thou art now, famous in the world, I have been, traveller,
And what I now am, thou wilt be in the future (lines 4–6).

The text here sets out the typical epitaphic exchange between life and death, past, present and future, subject and reader, and goes on to catalogue a series of further

²⁸ Story, 'Charlemagne's black marble', p. 190. See also, for example, Henry Mayr-Harting, 'Charlemagne, the Saxons, and the Imperial Coronation of 800', *The English Historical Review* 111 (1996), 1113–33.

²⁹ Luitpold Wallach, 'The Epitaph of Alcuin: A Model of Carolingian Epigraphy', *Speculum* 30 (1955), 367–73, p. 367.

³⁰ Wallach, 'The Epitaph of Alcuin', pp. 365, 372–73. All quotations from the epitaph are taken from Wallach's edition and translation.

³¹ Wallach translates 'scrutare' as 'ponder' (p. 373), but the verb implies a more rigorous, active and analytical reading process on the part of the reader.

antitheses in which the pleasures of earthly life are exchanged for the grim reality of the tomb. Through a series of examples, Alcuin shows how the ‘*delicias mundi*’ (‘delights of the world’, line 7) which he pursued and enjoyed have been replaced with the dust and ashes of the grave, cautioning his reader to reject illusory pleasures and worldly values (lines 7–16). In these lines, Alcuin presents his own failings (though cast in highly conventional, universalised terms) as a moral exemplum to the epitaph’s reader, showing how the earthly goals he pursued ‘*casso ... amore*’ (‘in vain desire’, line 7) have come to nothing. After this moralising passage, the text then explicitly articulates the central exchange demanded by the epitaph form:

Tu mihi redde vicem, lector, rogo, carminis huius
Et dic: ‘Da veniam, Christe, tuo famulo.’

Give me, I beg thee, O reader, a return for this poem,
And pray: ‘Grant, O Christ, forgiveness to thy servant’ (lines
17–18).

The multiple meanings of the verb *reddo* here pun neatly on the reader’s ‘return’ as both a ‘recompense’ or ‘repayment’ and a verbal ‘reply’ or ‘recitation’. The epitaph ends by imagining this crucial transaction between subject, text and reader played out: ‘*Pro quo funde preces mente legens titulum*’ (‘Pour out prayers for me when thou quietly readest this inscription’, line 24).³² Alcuin’s verses for himself make the epitaphic preoccupation with exchange and economy absolutely explicit, with the whole poem constructed around a central conceit of reading, reckoning and return. As an influential text in the early Middle Ages, it offers a paradigm for epitaphic writing, both in terms of its style and rhetoric and also in the direct way that it models the dynamics of economy at the heart of the genre.³³

Whilst the epitaphs composed by Alcuin represent the cultural production of an Anglo-Saxon author at the Carolingian court, there is also strong evidence for a Latin epitaphic tradition in early medieval England. Bede includes a number of poetic epitaphs in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, some composed by himself and others derived from other sources, including verses commemorating Gregory the Great, Theodore of Tarsus, Archbishop Wilfrid of York and Cædwalla, seventh-century king of the Gewisse in southern England.³⁴ The epitaphs selected for inclusion by Bede display many conventional features and together shape a sense of genre and recognisable literary tradition for Anglo-Saxon readers. The epitaph for Gregory the Great treats the concepts of reckoning and exchange on a number of levels: the verses announce

³² *Prex* is usually translated as ‘prayer’ or ‘petition’, but can mean ‘curse’ or ‘execration’ in classical Latin, possibly suggesting the potential for a bifurcation in reader response to the text and the sinful, yet repentant, subject it represents.

³³ For further discussion of Alcuin’s epigraphy, see Bernt, *Das lateinische Epigramm*, pp. 194–210.

³⁴ For a full list and overview see Bernt, *Das lateinische Epigramm*, p. 166. The short vernacular text apparently by Bede, known as *Bede’s Death Song*, could also be seen as a form of first-person epitaph, in which Bede looks ahead to the moment after death when his spirit will be ‘*godes oððe yfles ... doemed*’ (‘judged as good or evil’). See the *Epistola de Obitu Bedae* in *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969), pp. 580–87, pp. 582, 583.

that God will return ('reddere', line 2) new life to his servant, who in his virtuous career as pope converted ('conuertit', line 11) the English to Christianity and who habitually met the wants or needs (whether material or spiritual) of his flock with aid:

Esuriem dapibus superauit, frigora ueste,
Atque animas monitis textit ab hoste sacris...

Hunger with meat, winter with clothes he ended,
Souls with sound learning from the foe defended... (lines 7–8).³⁵

Whilst the epitaph acknowledges that Gregory's virtues are beyond human reckoning ('innumeris ... bonis', 'uncounted merits', line 5), the poem ends with a vision of Gregory taking up his divine 'reward' ('mercedem', line 16) in heaven. In highly formulaic terms, the spirit of this exemplary man 'astra petit' ('seeks the stars', line 3). For Theodore of Tarsus, Bede includes only the first and last lines of the verse: evidently these are considered adequate to summarise the archbishop's virtues and give the basic generic sign-posts of the epitaph form. Beginning with the conventional 'Hic ... pausat' ('Here ... lies', line 1), the opening lines given by Bede outline Theodore's career, while the final two distichs formulate an exact date for his death ('Namque diem nonam decimam September habebat', 'September was the month, the nineteenth day') and describe his ascent into new life in heaven.³⁶ Bede's own epitaph for Wilfrid of York shows a confident command of the genre, preceding the verse itself with a careful evocation of the 'here' within which the text should be imagined and mentally read. Bede tells us that, after his death, Wilfrid

...ministerio fratrum perlatus in primum suum monasterium, quod uocatur Inhrypum, positus est in ecclesia beati apostolic Petri iuxta altare ad austrum, ut et supra docuimus, et hoc de illo supra epitaphium scriptum...

...was carried by the brothers to his first monastery at Ripon and buried in the church of the blessed Apostle Peter close to the altar on the south side, as was mentioned before; his epitaph was inscribed over him as follows...³⁷

The 'locative declaration' of the epitaph is particularly significant here:³⁸ the formulaic 'hic' in the first line of Bede's verse plays a very specific role in linking the archbishop to the church which he founded and showing how his building on earth has earned a reward in heaven. In typical epitaph style, the length of Wilfrid's career as bishop is calculated ('Quindecies ternos ... annos', 'Thrice fifteen years', line 16), and the poem throughout records his generous gift-giving to the church at Ripon, both in terms of material benefaction (the building itself, a golden cross and ornamented Gospel-book) and spiritual gifts (the correct, catholic celebration of

³⁵ Text and translation from *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, Book II, Chapter 1, pp. 132, 133. All quotations from Gregory's epitaph are from this source, with some of my own modifications to the translation.

³⁶ *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, Book V, Chapter 8, pp. 474, 475.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Chapter 19, pp. 528–31.

³⁸ Newstok, *Quoting Death*, p. 34.

Easter).³⁹ It is through these gifts during life that he ‘caelestia regna petiuit’ (‘gained the kingdom of heaven’, line 17), the legalistic connotations of the verb *peto* suggesting the justice of his claim as an equitable recompense for his earthly generosity and devotion.

The epitaph in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* which has probably received most critical attention is that of Cædwalla, described in the text which Bede cites as ‘rex Saxonum’ (‘king of the Saxons’), who built a kingdom in the south of England until his abdication in 688 to travel to Rome to be baptised by Pope Sergius.⁴⁰ Having been given the baptismal name Peter, Cædwalla died shortly afterwards, still *in albis* (wearing the white, sacramental robe).⁴¹ The verse epitaph cited by Bede circulates in a range of different contexts in the early Middle Ages, and Bede may have known the text via a manuscript collection of inscriptions, though no definite evidence for its transmission to him survives.⁴² It has been suggested that either Wilfrid or Aldhelm might have been responsible for bringing the text of the epitaph back from Rome, where it was apparently inscribed in stone at St Peter’s, to Anglo-Saxon England.⁴³ Cædwalla’s epitaph in turn seems to have influenced writing in Anglo-Saxon England: Michael Lapidge has recently suggested that the poetry of Aldhelm shows borrowings from the text.⁴⁴ For Bede, producing a narrative of English national and religious identity in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, the epitaph of Cædwalla ‘fits well into the story he wished to tell of the church history of the English people’, forming an opportunity to celebrate, through the example of one king, the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons.⁴⁵ The epitaph of Cædwalla, as presented by Bede, is of particular interest in this discussion for a number of reasons. Firstly, as an epitaph for a king, it suggests how a ruler might be celebrated and commemorated in verse and the particular uses this may have for readers. Secondly, since Bede paraphrases the epitaph in prose before giving the verse text, it offers an opportunity to explore what the poetic version foregrounds and adds to the memorialisation of Cædwalla in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Within the special register of the verse epitaph we also see, once again, a sophisticated engagement with the genre’s thematic conventions of economy and exchange.

³⁹ *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, Book V, Chapter 19, pp. 528–31.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Chapter 7, pp. 472, 473.

⁴¹ See Richard Sharpe, ‘King Ceadwalla’s Roman Epitaph’, in *Latin Learning and English Lore: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature for Michael Lapidge*, ed. Katherine O’Brien O’Keeffe and Andy Orchard, 2 vols (Toronto, 2005), vol. 1, pp. 171–93, pp. 171–72.

⁴² Sharpe, ‘King Ceadwalla’s Roman Epitaph’, pp. 172, 173, 179. Michael Lapidge also considers this question in ‘The Career of Aldhelm’, *ASE* 36 (2007), 15–69, p. 60.

⁴³ Sharpe, ‘King Ceadwalla’s Roman Epitaph’, pp. 185–86; Lapidge, ‘The Career of Aldhelm’, pp. 60–61. For a reconstruction of the basilica of St Peter’s at this time, showing where the monument to Cædwalla may have been located, see Richard Krautheimer *et al.*, *Corpus basilicarum Christianarum Romae*, 5 vols (Vatican City, 1937–77), vol. 5, pp. 165–279, esp. p. 180 and pl. V, and Hugo Brandenburg, *Ancient Churches of Rome from the Fourth to the Seventh Century* (Brepols, 2005), pp. 91–102 and 275–81.

⁴⁴ Lapidge, ‘The Career of Aldhelm’, p. 60, esp. n. 206.

⁴⁵ Sharpe, ‘King Ceadwalla’s Roman Epitaph’, p. 179.

The verse epitaph for Cædwalla sets up a series of symmetries and parallels which are patterned across the poem. It begins by announcing Cædwalla's choice to reject earthly power and wealth in favour of Christian devotion, and includes several conventional epitaphic elements throughout, such as representation of the duality of the soul and body and the idea that a virtuous death 'bore him ... into the realms of light' ('uexit in arce poli', line 14).⁴⁶ At the thematic centre of the poem is the double exchange in which Cædwalla participates: his earthly choice to replace kingly power with Christian baptism, and his exchange, after death, of mortal life for joy in heaven. The epitaph tells us that, having abandoned the wealth and status of his secular life, Cædwalla decides to make a pilgrimage to Rome.

Percipiensque alacer rediuiuae praemia uitae,
Barbaricam rabiem nomen et inde suum
Conuuersus conuertit ouans: Petrumque uocari
Sergius antistes iussit...

So when with eager soul he sought new birth,
He laid aside his barbarous rage and shame
And, with changed heart, to Peter changed his name
As Sergius bade... (lines 8–11).⁴⁷

The polyptoton of 'Conuuersus conuertit' calls attention to this moment of change and transformation, as Cædwalla exchanges his previous life, identity and name for a new baptised Christian self. The epitaph also records Cædwalla's generosity in 'bearing gifts' ('dona gerens', line 20) throughout his arduous journey to offer to St Peter's in Rome. Cædwalla's death is presented as a second exchange, which mirrors the spiritual conversion of his baptism. Recalling the image of the white clothing worn at his baptism (line 14), the epitaph concludes with two couplets which draw together the themes of the poem as a whole.

Candidus inter oues Christi sociabilis ibit:
Corpore name tumulum, mente superna tenet.
Commutasce magis sceptorum insignia credas,
Quem regnum Christi promeruisse uides.

Now while within the tomb his body lies,
His soul, washed white, joins Christ's flock in the skies.
'Twould seem he laid his earthly sceptre down
Only to change it for Christ's lasting crown (lines 21–24).⁴⁸

The prominence of the verb *commuto* here parallels *conuerto* earlier in the poem, calling further attention to the series of exchanges at the heart of the poem, and the role of the epitaph itself in recording these spiritual transactions. This interest in the metaphorical and symbolic potentials of Cædwalla's baptism and death differentiates

⁴⁶ Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, Book V, Chapter 7, pp. 470, 471.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Book V, Chapter 7, pp. 472, 473.

the verse epitaph from the preceding prose text in Bede's *Historia*. Whilst Bede gives the factual details of Cædwalla's journey to Rome, baptism and death (and does note the meaningful detail that he died whilst still 'in albis'),⁴⁹ the poem is able to explore more fully the emblematic possibilities of the story, meditating on themes of conversion and transformation and drawing them into the traditional epitaphic framework of symbolic economy.

The epitaph for Cædwalla in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* makes no explicit petition for the reader's prayers: the poem perhaps presents a soul which is already guaranteed salvation in reward for good works on earth, but the request for prayer is not necessarily directly articulated in early medieval epitaphs and it may well be understood implicitly that this model of a virtuous life invites the reader's intercession. Significantly, Bede does give us some clues as to the intended function of this epitaph for readers viewing it at St Peter's in Rome and, by extension, in his reproduction in the *Historia*. He writes that, after Cædwalla's burial,

...iubente pontifice epitaphium in eius monumento scriptum, in quo et memoria deuotionis ipsius fixa per saecula maneret, et legentes quoque uel audientes exemplum facti ad stadium religionis accenderet.

...by order of the pope, an epitaph was placed on his tomb, so that the memory of his devotion might be preserved for ever and those who read it or heard it might be kindled to religious zeal by his example.⁵⁰

Bede's contextualisation reveals the function of medieval epitaphs in 'recording their subjects' conformity to cultural codes and conventions and in doing so confirming and legitimating those conventions in the communities for which they were written'.⁵¹ He emphasises how the epitaph records and publicises the example of Cædwalla in order to stimulate future memory and religious devotion. Interestingly, this explanation of the function of the epitaph resonates with Bede's comments about the purpose of history in general in the opening letter to King Ceolwulf of Northumbria which precedes the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. In these well-known lines, Bede provides a model for reading and interpretation, tailored particularly towards the needs and concerns of a secular, royal audience.

Siue enim historia de bonis bona referat, ad imitandum bonum auditor sollicitus instigator: seu mala commemoret de prauis, nihilominus religiosus ac pius auditor siue lector deuotando quod noxium est ac peruersum, ipse sollertius ad exsquenda ea quae bona ac Deo digna esse cognouerit, accenditur.

Should history tell of good men and their good estate, the thoughtful listener is spurred on to imitate the good; should it record the evil ends of wicked men, no less effectually the devout and earnest listener or reader is kindled to eschew

⁴⁹ Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, Book V, Chapter 7, pp. 470, 471.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Roberts, *The Humblest Sparrow*, pp. 32–33.

what is harmful and perverse, and himself with greater care pursue those things which he has learned to be good and pleasing in the sight of God.⁵²

Within the work in general, Cædwalla is one of these ‘good men’ from whom the reader can learn and has a particular place within Bede’s ‘unprecedented concern with the behaviour of kings’ and the presentation of good kingship in the *Historia*.⁵³ In the context of Bede’s acute attention to audience and purpose in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* as a whole, then, the epitaph for Cædwalla gathers additional functions as a royal panegyric, a didactic text (for a wide audience, both religious and lay) and a ‘mirror for princes’.⁵⁴ Like the other early medieval epitaphs examined so far in this chapter (with the possible exception of Alcuin’s epitaph as a slightly more complex example), Cædwalla’s epitaph is laudatory, celebrating the achievements and virtues of its subject. Yet, as this discussion has aimed to demonstrate, it should not be understood merely as a straightforward encomium or panegyric. The Cædwalla poem engages with a range of conventions specific to the epitaph genre, focusing on concepts of economy, exchange and reckoning, and demanding an active moral interpretation and response from the reader. In addition, the verses for Cædwalla begin to generate questions about how the epitaph of a king or ruler might do specific work for its community, perhaps by offering a space for reflection on a wider national story, or by enabling particular kinds of connection and association between the memorialised subject and the reader. These are questions to which this chapter will return.

So, there is evidence for a strong epitaphic tradition in early medieval Europe, and the Latin verse epitaph as a genre was certainly known, circulated and recognised within literate communities in Anglo-Saxon England, where the textual tradition of the verse epitaph can be situated within a wider cultural landscape of commemoration of the dead, including the practice of erecting funerary monuments and the use of inscriptions upon them. Victoria Thompson has discussed the function of commemorative stones in Anglo-Saxon England, looking in particular at the memorial formulae with which they are inscribed and the range of contemporary terms which seem to describe them.⁵⁵ She notes that the Old English *becun* is often used to refer to the monument itself, commenting that ‘many of the *becun*-inscriptions use alliterative memorial formulae, often in runes or a mixture of roman and runic alphabets, which typically name both the person commemorated and the stone’s sponsor, “X set up this *becun* in memory of Y”’. She goes on to observe that ‘in most cases *becun* alliterates with *gebiddae* (pray for)’.⁵⁶ Whilst Thompson points out that the body itself is still usually the centre of Anglo-Saxon burial practice, and

⁵² Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, Preface, pp. 2, 3.

⁵³ N.J. Higham, (Re-)Reading Bede: *The Ecclesiastical History in Context* (Oxford, 2006), p. 188. See also pp. 41–42.

⁵⁴ For an overview of this genre, see Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (London, 1953), p. 177.

⁵⁵ Victoria Thompson, *Dying and Death in Later Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 106–7. Many of the inscriptions found on these monuments are also catalogued, by location, in Elizabeth Okasha, *Hand-list of Anglo-Saxon Non-Runic Inscriptions* (Cambridge, 1971).

⁵⁶ Thompson, *Dying and Death*, pp. 106–7.

that the more elaborate stone monuments are rare,⁵⁷ her discussion provides evidence of an English, vernacular tradition of commemorating the dead with inscriptions. Yet despite their use of literary devices such as alliteration, familiar from Old English vernacular poetry, the examples are short and cannot be described as fully-developed epitaphs, which instead seem to be restricted to manuscript contexts in Anglo-Saxon England. However, the material which Thompson gathers does suggest the place of literary epitaphs within wider traditions and evokes the broader importance of memorialising and reflecting upon the dead in early medieval English culture.

So, what were the purposes of these various practices of commemorating the dead in Anglo-Saxon England? For the stone monuments with their inscriptions, Thompson suggests that they 'seem primarily designed to catch the attention of and elicit prayer from the onlooker through a multiplicity of devices'.⁵⁸ In the case of the full verse epitaphs circulating in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, we might return to the functions prioritised by Bede, which include the hermeneutic challenge presented to the reader, the demand for moral reflection, and the opportunity to weigh up the good and bad in history's examples. Whether in the form of a textual or material monument, these Anglo-Saxon memorials all set up an economy between the deceased subject (and sometimes the patron or author who has commemorated them), text and reader, advancing the fame and prestige of the dead but also petitioning (whether explicitly or implicitly) for memory, esteem and prayer. The Latin verse epitaphs known in Anglo-Saxon England represent a more complex, fully-developed literary tradition with roots in classical and continental culture, yet they are clearly not wholly discrete or remote from these other English commemorative practices. The verse epitaphs circulating in manuscript contexts claim a more spacious 'here' within which to explore the economies of exchange and reckoning implicit in any of these memorials to the dead.

Turning now to what I describe as the 'poetic epitaphs' of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, it is important to establish some of the key terms of my analysis and the critical context for reading these texts. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and its poems have received significant critical interest in recent years, with several radical reappraisals and revisionist approaches published. Together, many of these new readings urge us to consider 'poetry' or 'poetic writing' in the Chronicle in broader terms, and have refocused attention on many of the late Chronicle verses. The Chronicle itself is a complex text, presenting particular interpretative challenges and questions. Thomas Bredehoft reminds us that what modern scholars usually term 'the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle' is not a single, monolithic document, but rather 'a complex and challenging collection of works based upon a common root but branching in a bewildering variety of directions'.⁵⁹ Yet he argues that there is a strong case for reading across these various manuscripts and recensions in order to explore the Chronicle, arguing that, in early medieval England, 'the *Chronicle* was clearly

⁵⁷ Thompson, *Dying and Death*, p. 118.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

⁵⁹ Bredehoft, *Textual Histories*, p. 7. As previously noted, Bredehoft gives a concise survey of the various Chronicle manuscripts at pp. 4–6.

understood to be a cultural document quite literally larger than any one of its manuscripts'.⁶⁰ Beyond these complex definitions of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle itself, ongoing debate concentrates on the question of what should be categorised within it as poetry. Certainly, not all the passages which I refer to as 'poetic' have always been accepted as such or allowed within the traditional canon of Old English poetry. Whilst *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records* relied primarily on the use of (Sieversian) metrical analysis for the definition of 'poems' within the Chronicle,⁶¹ subsequent re-evaluations have been based on a range of factors including manuscript presentation, and the occurrence of features such as rhyme, rhythm and 'graphic clues'.⁶² Bredehoft in particular makes a strong case for a more inclusive definition of verse within the Chronicle, looking at where more broadly 'poetic' features and signals of poetic intention (such as the use of capitals or particular kinds of pointing) are present, arguing that significantly more passages than those recognised by *ASPR* 'functioned as poems for the *Chronicle's* original readers and writers'.⁶³ In this discussion, I will address the arguments for considering each Anglo-Saxon Chronicle passage as 'poetic' as I deal with it in detail.

My approach to epitaphic writing in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle will also read a range of poetic passages alongside each other, even though they appear in different annals and even in different manuscripts. Whilst I will pay attention to the context of poetic passages within specific annals, and to the differences between uses of poetic and epitaphic writing in different branches of the Chronicle, there are also strong arguments for reading the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle poems together as a group. Thomas Bredehoft contends that, while attention to 'most immediate context' (usually understood in terms of manuscript location) is currently the dominant critical trend in medieval literary scholarship, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle poems present a rather different case. He suggests that, for example:

...the most useful context for interpreting a poem such as the 1096E poem on William the Conqueror may not be Bodleian Laud Misc. 636, where it uniquely occurs, since this manuscript contains very few of the *Chronicle* poems. Indeed, no manuscript of the *Chronicle* contains all of the *Chronicle*

⁶⁰ Bredehoft, *Textual Histories*, p. 7.

⁶¹ See Thomas A. Bredehoft, 'The Boundaries Between Verse and Prose in Old English Literature', in *Old English Literature in its Manuscript Context*, ed. Joyce Tally Lionarons (Morgantown, 2004), pp. 139–72, pp. 140–41.

⁶² For overviews of the critical history of identifying the Chronicle poems, see for example Bredehoft, *Textual Histories*, pp. 73–77, Renée R. Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia: Historical Representation in Old English Verse* (Toronto, 2009), pp. 214–16 and 218–30, and relevant discussion in O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'Deaths and Transformations', *passim*. The phrase 'graphic clues' is used by O'Brien O'Keeffe in her discussion of the Chronicle poems: 'Poems of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*', in her *Visible Song: Transitional Literacy in Old English Verse* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 108–37.

⁶³ Bredehoft, *Textual Histories*, p. 99.

poems, yet because the *Chronicle* was a cultural document larger than any one of its manuscripts, the *Chronicle* poems define a context in which the 1086E poem can be usefully interpreted.⁶⁴

Renée Trilling's recent work on the *Chronicle* has also been based on grouping its poems together, though she divides the poetic passages into two discrete categories, 'canonical' and 'transitional'.⁶⁵ Her reading draws distinctions between the more traditional forms and themes of the tenth-century *Chronicle* poems, and the 'variant aesthetic' styles and different ideological intentions found in the later poetic passages or the northern recension manuscripts.⁶⁶ Whilst her work acknowledges important differences between the various passages, it also demonstrates the lasting effect of the rigid canonical distinctions and exclusions imposed by *ASPR*. This reading will seek to avoid the fundamental separation between 'canonical' and 'non-canonical' *Chronicle* verse. On the other hand, whilst reading all the poetic passages of the Anglo-Saxon *Chronicle* together allows recognition of the ways in which the texts participate in shared traditions, aims and conventions, problems can arise when they are collected too neatly together. Jayne Carroll has commented on the 'tendency to group the *Chronicle* poems together and treat them all as secular panegyric', which misses stylistic and thematic nuances across the texts, and which also reflects the limited critical interest accorded to many of the later passages.⁶⁷

I want to avoid the trap of levelling the differences between the *Chronicle* poems in order to fit them within one generic category. But I do want to explore the possibility of reading a number of the late Anglo-Saxon *Chronicle* poetic passages as epitaphs, examining how they might share among them a conscious sense of genre and tradition and how they might suggest ways in which epitaphic writing is appropriate to the broader historiographical project of the *Chronicle*. In the final section of this chapter I will look in detail at the poetic passages relating to Edgar (975ABC, 973ABC, 975DE, 959DE and 975D), but first I will look across the very late *Chronicle* poetry to explore how the verse epitaph might have been understood and deployed in this historical work. I will also consider how the core epitaphic concept of the 'here' or 'hic' – the site of remembrance and reckoning – may have been re-imagined in the *Chronicle* context. An overview of these poetic texts suggests how tropes and conventions of the epitaph (as modelled in early medieval Latin literature) are appropriated to varying degrees in different passages. Yet it also

⁶⁴ Bredehoft, *Textual Histories*, p. 7.

⁶⁵ For example, Trilling divides her discussion of the *Chronicle* poems in *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia* into two chapters: 'Poetic Memory: the Canonical Verse of the Anglo-Saxon *Chronicle*' (pp. 175–213) and 'Transitional Verse in the Anglo-Saxon *Chronicle*: Changing the Shape of History' (pp. 214–52).

⁶⁶ Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, p. 235 and throughout the discussion pp. 214–52.

⁶⁷ Carroll, 'Engla Waldend, Rex Admirabilis', p. 116. Similarly, Martin Irvine's grouping of the four 'main poems' of the late Anglo-Saxon *Chronicle* (*The Battle of Brunanburh*, *The Capture of the Five Boroughs*, *The Coronation of Edgar* and *The Death of Edgar*) allows him to treat them as 'heroic' texts and to comment on their shared function as 'a vehicle for nostalgia, for the repetition of the heroic in the present', whilst ignoring the other late poetic material which does not fit into this category. See Martin Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture: 'Grammatica' and Literary Theory 350–1100* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 451–52.

indicates the emergence of more nuanced, multi-layered versions of epitaphic writing in English, which blend a range of literary genres and idioms from both Latin and vernacular traditions.

Treating the later poetic passages in chronological order (that is, by annal date), this overview will begin with the 979 passage in manuscripts D and E which gives an account of the death of King Edward 'the Martyr', son of Edgar, who succeeded to the throne after his father's death in 975, aged around thirteen, and was murdered in 978 at Corfe Castle. The 979DE passage is not often regarded as verse, but there are some arguments for identifying it as poetic in nature. Thomas Bredehoft has looked at the passage in detail as part of his investigation of prose and poetry in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, arguing that its carefully-balanced rhetorical formulations may well have been regarded as 'heightened prose' by early readers.⁶⁸ He finds no clear manuscript evidence that its scribes perceived the passage as poetry, though hints that the D scribe may have done so.⁶⁹ The Chronicle's description of Edward as 'heofonlic sanct' clearly dates the text to some time after the events of 978/9; Bredehoft argues that, whilst the text evidently fails to conform to classical Old English poetic metre, it displays the same 'concern with historical precedent' which he regards as characteristic of the Chronicle poems as a whole. Yet whereas many Chronicle poems celebrate genealogical relationships, they are obscured here, perhaps due to the fact that Edward's successor was his own brother, Æthelræd.⁷⁰ Renée Trilling describes the passage as a 'poem', yet places it within the category of later 'variant' verse in the Chronicle, suggesting that it exemplifies the concerns of the later or northern recension poems by focusing on religious values rather than secular praise. Indeed, she comments explicitly that the poem 'does not eulogize Edward so much as it celebrates God's role in determining human events'.⁷¹ The wording of the passage is almost identical in manuscripts D and E, yet recent editions have made different decisions about presentation: Susan Irvine sets the E-text as poetry, while G.P. Cubbin's edition of D prefers a prose lay-out.⁷²

The 979DE passage does display some key features which could be aligned with the traditions of epitaphic writing. In particular, the theme of exchange or economy runs throughout the annal as both a structural principle and as a moral imperative which in turn extends to the reader's own response. In addition to the fundamental exchange of earthly death and shame for eternal life and glory which Edward's story represents, the passage seems particularly concerned with the way in which God's

⁶⁸ Bredehoft, *Textual Histories*, p. 86.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 106. For a fuller discussion of Bredehoft's concept of 'historical precedent' in the Chronicle, see Thomas A. Bredehoft, 'History and Memory in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle', in *Readings in Medieval Texts: Interpreting Old and Middle English Literature*, ed. David F. Johnson and Elaine M. Treharne (Oxford, 2005), pp. 109–21.

⁷¹ Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, p. 239.

⁷² See *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition: Vol. 7, MS E*, ed. Susan Irvine (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 59–60; *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition: Vol. 6, MS D*, ed. G.P. Cubbin (Cambridge, 1996), p. 47. It should be noted, however, that Cubbin prefers a prose lay-out throughout. All quotations from the 979 annal in this discussion are taken from Irvine's edition of the E-text.

intervention redresses the ignominy of Edward's hasty burial at Wareham, 'buton ælcum cynelicum wurðscipe' ('without any kingly honours'),⁷³ focusing on concepts of fame, memory and remembrance. The poetic passage here participates self-consciously in this process of commemoration and promulgation, helping to bring Edward's death out of the murky shadows of tenth-century Wessex, and operating as we would expect of an epitaph by securing a public place and wide attention for its subject's death. The annal balances a series of exchanges or transformations, made particularly prominent in Irvine's presentation of the text in half-lines. The fundamental and central antithesis comes first: 'Men hine ofmyrðrodon, ac God hine mærsode' ('Men murdered him, but God exalted him'), with the Old English verb *mærsian* also incorporating the meanings 'made famous' or 'glorified'. The subsequent series of exchanges presented by the annal centre on the transformation from past to present and future (pivoting on the repeated uses of Old English 'ac', meaning 'but' and pairings of 'ær', 'formerly' and 'nu', 'now'), drawing a contrast between the earthly men who previously killed Edward (and the relatives who failed to avenge him) and God who gives him new life and glory, as well as men in the present who offer Edward the respect and veneration he deserves. There is also clear evidence of Old English literary heroic tradition and values here, as the poem implicitly condemns the fact that Edward's kin did not wish to 'wrecan' ('avenge') his death, whilst God has 'swiðe gewrecen' ('greatly avenged') him. The annal focuses on the exchange between earthly obscurity in Edward's short reign and shameful burial, and his glorious after-life:

Pa eorðlican banan woldon his gemynd on erðan adilgian,
ac se uplica wrecend hafað his gemynd on heofenum ȝ on
eorðan tobræd.

Those earthly killers wanted to blot out his memory upon earth, but the supreme Avenger has spread abroad his memory in the heavens and on earth.

This is further reinforced through a contrast between the treatment given to Edward's earthly body and his saintly remains.

Pa he nolden ær to his libbendum lichaman onbugan,
pa nu eadmodlice on cneowum abugað to his dædum banum.

Those who formerly did not want to bow down to his living body, they now humbly bend their knees to his dead bones.

Whilst the annal clearly tells the story of Edward's transformation from earthly king to heavenly saint, with relics venerated on earth,⁷⁴ the concepts of exchange and reckoning are fundamental to the 979 passage. It presents a carefully-tallied account of justice, both for Edward and for those who harmed him, and provides an

⁷³ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Vol. 7, MS E*, ed. Irvine, p. 60.

⁷⁴ For a detailed account of Edward's 'martyrdom' and his cult at Anglo-Saxon Shaftesbury, see Barbara Yorke, 'St Edward, King and Martyr: an Anglo-Saxon Murder Mystery', in *Studies in the Early History of Shaftesbury Abbey*, ed. Laurence Keen (Dorchester, 1999), pp. 99–116.

opportunity for the reader to evaluate the various roles of those involved in Edward's story, offer prayer, and reflect on his own condition as subject to the judgement of God and human memory. Indeed, the annal does not represent a straightforward eulogy, but instead asks the reader to participate in processes of commemoration and reckoning typical of the epitaph tradition.

The 1036CD poetic passage on the death of Alfred tells the story of another murder: the blinding and death of the 'unsceððiga æþeling' ('guiltless prince') at Ely.⁷⁵ The manuscript presentation of this passage as either verse or prose is inconclusive,⁷⁶ and recent editions have again chosen different formats, with Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe setting the text as poetry and G.P. Cubbin as prose.⁷⁷ However, the 1036CD passage is accepted as verse in *ASPR*, and certainly contains poetic features such as rhyme and alliteration, though it departs from classical Old English metrical convention.⁷⁸ Together with the poem on the death of Edward the Confessor in 1065CD, Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe has described the 1036CD passage as 'a journeyman's performance – perfunctory, gestural, and dull'.⁷⁹ Interestingly, this evaluation in many ways evokes the features we might expect of the epitaph as an occasional genre, crafted to order by a poet in order to commemorate a subject and fulfil a very specific function. Indeed, O'Brien O'Keeffe suggests elsewhere in the same discussion that both the 1036CD and 1065CD poems represent the end of a particular kind of epitaphic tradition in Anglo-Saxon England although, as noted earlier in this chapter, she does not pursue the implications of this generic definition in her reading of the texts.⁸⁰ With its claim that no worse deed was committed in England 'syþþan Dene comon ȝ her frið namon' ('since the Danes came and made peace here'), the annal includes the historical comparison which Bredehoft sees as typical of the Chronicle poems, and its commemoration of a royal figure (whilst in this case fraught with controversy) is again characteristic of the Chronicle verse. But can this poetic passage be usefully understood as an epitaph?

In some ways, the annal does seem to signal itself as a kind of epitaph. In particular, it creates a clear space for commemoration and reckoning – the 'here-ness' so central to the epitaph as a genre. Whilst the annal begins in prose and only turns into poetry as it moves into the more heightened, affective narrative of Godwine's capture of Alfred ('Ac Godwine hine þa gelette...'), the verse is set in place under the opening 'Her' conventional to the Chronicle format, further highlighted in the C

⁷⁵ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition: Vol. 5, MS C*, ed. Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe (Cambridge, 2001), p. 105. All quotations from the 1036 annal are taken from this edition, pp. 105–6.

⁷⁶ In 'The Boundaries Between Verse and Prose', Bredehoft describes the lay-out (in terms of the differentiation of this passage from the surrounding prose) as 'unclear' (p. 167).

⁷⁷ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Vol. 5, MS C*, ed. O'Brien O'Keeffe, pp. 105–6; *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Vol. 6, MS D*, ed. Cubbin, pp. 65–66.

⁷⁸ See discussion in O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'Deaths and Transformations', pp. 149, 150 and *passim*; Bredehoft, 'The Boundaries', p. 167.

⁷⁹ O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'Deaths and Transformations', p. 150.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

manuscript through the use of red for the initial.⁸¹ Indeed, throughout the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, epitaphic verse is written into this new site of the 'here' – not the material 'hic' of the tombstone, but the textual 'Her' of the annal, imagined as a locus in time. In the case of the 1036CD entry, the poem also ends with a description of Alfred's tomb, recalling the contextual detail given by Bede which links the text of Cædwalla's epitaph to his burial-place, and which here connects the poetic commemoration in the Chronicle with the material monument to Alfred at Ely.

Syððan hine man byrigde swa him wel gebyrede,
ful wurðlice, swa he wyrðe wæs,
æt þam westende þam styple ful gehende,
on þam suðportice...

Afterwards he was buried, as well befitted him, most honourably, as he deserved, at the west end, very close to the steeple, in the south side-chapel...

Like the 979DE passage commemorating Edward, the 1036CD verse makes the exchanges and transformations in Alfred's life particularly prominent: large black capitals mark the initials of 'Nu' and 'Syððan' which both open lines, emphasising how, in contrast to his shameful death, 'Now' Alfred rejoices with Christ and 'After' his murder he is eventually accorded honour. As with the 979DE passage, the verse here also helps to establish a practice of veneration or cult centred on the site of the subject's relics. But the description of Alfred's tomb at Ely also enables the text to become, literally, a kind of epitaph, asserting itself as writing 'around' the grave of the subject.⁸² The 1036 passage includes several other elements which could be regarded as typical of epitaphic writing, including the insistence that the soul of the departed is with Christ, and the emphasis on reckoning and reward as Alfred is honoured with a proper burial on earth as well as bliss in heaven. But, in other ways, the text fits less well into the conventions of epitaphic verse. It focuses on Alfred's death at the expense of recording any achievements during his life, a feature which leads Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe to interpret its idiom as primarily homiletic and hagiographic (though she acknowledges the 'hybrid' nature of its form).⁸³ She suggests that this passage has 'ambitions ... which exceed those of epitaph and look rather to the promotion of a cult of the dead prince'.⁸⁴ The poetic passage of 1036CD fits more obviously, perhaps, into literary homiletic and martyrological traditions. But its sense of 'here' is still particularly striking, and it still invites the contemplation, reckoning and prayer characteristic of the verse epitaph.

⁸¹ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Vol 5, MS C*, ed. O'Brien O'Keeffe, p. 105. The use of red for initials and dates in MS C (the 'Abingdon Chronicle') is conventional throughout.

⁸² Newstok comments that 'The prefix *epi* generally means "on", but also "about", "above", "around", "in addition", "near" – all circum-locations in their own way.' See Newstok, *Quoting Death*, p. 46.

⁸³ O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'Deaths and Transformations', pp. 160, 164. See also Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, p. 244.

⁸⁴ O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'Deaths and Transformations', p. 164.

The 1065CD poem on the death of Edward, later known as ‘the Confessor’, has been defined as a ‘eulogy’ by Renée Trilling and as an ‘obit’ by Thomas D. Hill.⁸⁵ The verse is clearly distinguished from the prose,⁸⁶ but resonates with the annal’s wider celebration of Edward as a benefactor and patron, especially of Westminster, ‘þe he sylf getimbrode Gode to lofe’ (‘which he himself built to the praise of God’).⁸⁷ Trilling suggests that

Like the church at Westminster, the verse s.a. 1065 is meant to stand as a monument to the king who will later be known as “the Confessor”. Introduced by the phrase *swa hyt her æfter seigð* and set off from the preceding text by an initial capital, the encomium memorializes Edward as both Christian king and scion of the great House of Wessex.⁸⁸

Trilling’s reading calls attention to the way in which the 1065CD poem, like the poetic passage at 1036CD, can be understood as a textual parallel to a material monument, perhaps recalling the function of verse epitaphs circulating in manuscript contexts which work to establish an imaginative connection between a textual ‘here’ and the location of a physical tablet or burial elsewhere. The verse form of the 1065CD verse is much more traditional and conservative compared with many of the later Chronicle poetic passages, sending political signals about English identity and continuity even at this moment of rupture and crisis.⁸⁹

The poem includes many features which are characteristic of epitaphic writing, including the exact reckoning of time (here the ‘24-and-a-half’ years of Edward’s reign as well as his period of exile),⁹⁰ the record of the subject’s achievements (as a wise king and benefactor), and the formulaic statements that Edward ‘sende soþfæste sawle to Criste’ (‘sent a righteous soul to Christ’) and that ‘Englas feredon / soþfæste sawle innan swegles leoht’ (‘Angels carried the righteous soul into the light of heaven’). But the verse also includes elements which are more suggestive of English vernacular literary tradition including, in particular, the trope of the exile. The text tells us that:

Wæs a bliðemod bealuleas kyng,
þeah he lang ær lande bereafod,
wunode wræclastum wide geond eorðan,
syððan Cnut ofercom kynn Æðelredes

⁸⁵ Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, p. 208; Thomas D. Hill, ‘The “Variegated Obit” as an Historiographical Motif in Old English Poetry and Anglo-Latin Historical Literature’, *Traditio* 44 (1988), 101–24, p. 116. For further discussion of the ‘obit’ as a genre and its relation to epitaph, see below, p. 70.

⁸⁶ Bredehoft, ‘The Boundaries Between Verse and Prose’, p. 167.

⁸⁷ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Vol. 5, MS C*, ed. O’Brien O’Keeffe, p. 118. All quotations from the 1065 annal are taken from this edition (pp. 117–19).

⁸⁸ Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, p. 209.

⁸⁹ See for example O’Brien O’Keeffe, ‘Deaths and Transformations’, pp. 164, 171; Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, p. 211.

⁹⁰ The D manuscript gives the length of Edward’s reign as twenty-four years, but Michael Swanton comments that this seems to be the result of a scribal misunderstanding. See *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. and trans. Michael Swanton (London, 1997), p. 193.

ȝ Dena weoldon deore rice
 Engla landes .xxxviii.
 wintra gerimes...

The blameless king was always cheerful in spirit, although he, a long time before, deprived of his land, had lived in the paths of exile widely across the earth, since Cnut overcame the kin of Æthelræd and the Danes had ruled the dear kingdom of the land of the English, for the count of 28 winters...

The text portrays exile here in highly conventional terms, including the motif of separation or deprivation, the measurement of time in hostile 'winters', the image of the 'paths of exile' which reach across the earth, and the ultimate contrast between physical hardship and the stoic demeanour of the virtuous man.⁹¹ This exile imagery is deployed appropriately in this context, reflecting not only Edward's experience during the reign of Cnut, but also, fittingly in this memorial piece, suggesting the traditional Christian understanding of earthly life as a period of exile from God.⁹² Renée Trilling further suggests that the depiction of Edward as an exile may be an attempt to align his experience with Anglo-Saxon history and identity more widely, commenting that Edward 'replay[s] the migration history of his ancestors' and the triumph of 'overcoming the adversity of exile'.⁹³ The poem's personification of death as a stealthy warrior or predator who 'swa deore genam / æþelne of eorðan' ('seized such a dear prince from the earth') is also evocative of Old English vernacular poetry, though there is a similar tradition of presenting death as a predator in early medieval Latin epitaphic verse.⁹⁴ Ending with lines on the succession of Harold, recording the exchange of power from one virtuous ruler to a worthy and 'heahþungenum' ('illustrious') other, 'the work of the poem is firmly in its present'.⁹⁵ It fulfils the function of an epitaph in using the example of one subject to maintain and shape social values and ideology – in this case, a sense of English history and cultural identity in the context of the upheaval and uncertainty of the mid-tenth century.⁹⁶ Yet the poem clearly represents a synthesis of literary idioms drawn from a range of genres and from both Latin and vernacular traditions. The commemoration of Edward in 1065CD emerges as a very English version of epitaphic writing, written at the very end of Anglo-Saxon England.

The last poetic passage in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle which could be considered an epitaph takes us beyond the traditional limit of Anglo-Saxon England, marking the death of William the Conqueror (1086E, recording events properly dated to 1087). Whilst Trilling does still refer to this text as a 'eulogy', clearly the 1086E passage does not fit into expectations of panegyric or encomium in the Chronicle's

⁹¹ The features of this passage in 1065CD can be compared with the Old English 'elegies' *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*. See *The Exeter Anthology*, ed. Muir, pp. 218–22 and 232–36.

⁹² See for example Hebrews 11:13–16.

⁹³ Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, p. 210.

⁹⁴ See for example Roberts, *The Humblest Sparrow*, p. 13.

⁹⁵ O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'Deaths and Transformations', p. 170.

⁹⁶ For the purpose of the epitaph in promoting social values, see Scodel, *The English Poetic Epitaph*, pp. 1–2.

verse commemorations of rulers.⁹⁷ Bredehoft notes that the poem 'does not simply praise William, but actively presents negative facts'.⁹⁸ Seth Lerer has described the verse as an 'obituary', a more neutral term which removes the assumption of panegyric intention,⁹⁹ and has also suggested that the passage could be read as homiletic. He comments that:

The entry for the year 1087 looks back on William's reign to offer a sermon on greed and power, peppered with exhortations, rhetorical questions, and allusions to the Bible, Boethius, and the rich tradition of Old English gnomic verse. As the *Chronicle's* editor, Cecily Clark, notes, the rhetorical and moralizing excesses of the retrospective make it the language not of history but of the pulpit.¹⁰⁰

The 1086E lines on the death of William evidently represent a form of verse, though based on rhyming couplets rather than traditional Anglo-Saxon metre and alliteration. As many studies have observed, the passage reflects the increasing currency of continental literary forms in England after 1066 and signals powerfully in literary terms the cultural changes brought about by the Conquest.¹⁰¹ Yet despite the innovative verse form and style of the poem on the death of William, Lerer argues that the poem reflects 'older Anglo-Saxon philosophical concerns with the transitoriness of human works and with death and burial', and suggests that the poem belongs to 'an important genre of Old English verse, the poem on the grave'.¹⁰²

Whilst he does not use the term anywhere in his study, Lerer's definition of this 'important genre' forms a vernacular equivalent of the Greek *epitaphos* and its etymology. The poem on the death of William could be read as anti-panegyric – even as a parody of the encomium to a dead ruler – but the generic lens of the epitaph allows an interpretation which acknowledges the text's complexity and its stark presentation of the Conqueror's character. The 1086E verse does indeed generate many of the central thematic concerns and textual dynamics of the epitaph, including in particular the direct engagement with the reader's powers of reckoning and judgement. The text records William's achievements during his life, including castle-building, the introduction of taxes, law-making and the establishment of royal

⁹⁷ Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, p. 245. However, Trilling also notes that 'In contrast to those of the Anglo-Saxon kings whose memorials precede his in the Chronicle, William's legacy is not that of the good Christian ruler' (p. 246). For an early study of the poem, see Bartlett J. Whiting, 'The Rime of King William', in *Philologica: The Malone Anniversary Studies*, ed. T.A. Kirby and H.B. Woolf (Baltimore, 1949), pp. 89–96.

⁹⁸ Bredehoft, *Textual Histories*, p. 115.

⁹⁹ See for example Seth Lerer, 'The Genre of the Grave and the Origins of the Middle English Lyric', *Modern Language Quarterly* 58 (1997), 127–61, p. 135; Seth Lerer, 'Old English and its afterlife' in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 7–34, p. 17.

¹⁰⁰ Lerer, 'The Genre of the Grave', p. 133.

¹⁰¹ See for example Lerer, 'The Genre of the Grave', p. 134; Lerer, 'Old English and its afterlife', p. 18; Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, p. 245. For a wider discussion of the style and provenance of the poem, see Stefan Jurasinski, 'The Rime of King William and its Analogues', *Neophilologus* 88 (2004), 131–44.

¹⁰² Lerer, 'The Genre of the Grave', p. 132.

forests, though these are balanced throughout with a recognition of the oppression and misery which characterised his reign.¹⁰³ This overview of William's kingship ends with a typically epitaphic focus on the process of reckoning and evaluation. First, the poem presents William's own distorted reckoning, which led to such pride and arrogance in his earthly life.

Walawa þet ænig man sceolde modigan swa,
hine sylf upp ahebban ȝ ofer ealle men tellan.

Alas, that any man should be so proud, raise himself up and reckon himself above all men.

Based on his own 'reckoning' or 'account', William is superior to all other men. These lines even seem to parody the formulaic language of the epitaph, which conventionally commemorates God's redemption of the soul and its path upwards into the heavens: here William 'raises up' himself in his earthly ambition and pride. The poem ends by re-positioning this power of reckoning with God, calling for judgement and grace after William's death.

Se ælmihtiga God cyþæ his saule mildheortnisse
ȝ do him his synna forgifenesse!

May the almighty God show his soul mercy and grant him forgiveness of his sins.

The final lines acknowledge William's sinfulness in life, but also ask for a divine judgement which exceeds the count of William's earthly merits and makes available redemption.

Throughout, the 1086E poem shows the direct engagement with the reader which is typical of epitaphic writing. The features which Lerer identifies as characteristic of a homiletic idiom ('exhortations, rhetorical questions') are just as integral to the epitaph's process of eliciting attention from the reader and asking him to scrutinise the subject being portrayed. Crucially, the lines immediately following the poem also reflect this central convention of epitaphic writing, presenting a hermeneutic challenge to the reader in which he is invited to reckon, evaluate and judge.

Das þing we habbað be him gewritene, ægðer ge gode ge yfele, þet þa godan men niman æfter þeora godnesse ȝ forleon mid ealle yfelnesse ȝ gan on ðone weg þe us let to heofonan rice.

These things we have written, both the good and the evil, so that good men may take after the goodness and utterly reject the evil, and go forward in the path which leads us to the kingdom of heaven.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Vol. 7, MS E*, ed. Irvine, pp. 97–98. All quotations from the 1086E poem are taken from this edition.

¹⁰⁴ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Vol. 7, MS E*, ed. Irvine, p. 98.

These lines recall Bede's explanation of the purpose of Cædwalla's epitaph, which is inscribed in Rome and recorded in his *Historia* so that 'legentes quoque uel audientes exemplum facti ad stadium religionis accenderet' ('those who read it or heard it might be kindled to religious zeal by his example').¹⁰⁵ William, however, presents a mixed example of both good and evil, which the reader must weigh up and interpret, only then joining in with the poem's petition to God and selecting moral lessons as deemed appropriate. The ambivalence of the representation of William and the complexity of the hermeneutic response required of the reader challenge Renée Trilling's assertion that the later Chronicle verse requires less active 'apprehension and interpretation' on the part of the audience, or that it 'carries its own interpretation with it as a part of its aesthetic form'.¹⁰⁶ Instead, the 1086E poem is a challenging text which demands rigorous reading and reckoning. The verse builds a picture of William's earthly power, but in the final lines and subsequent prose this power transfers to different locations – to God and to the reader of the epitaph as judges in heaven and on earth. Whilst the poem's survey of William's life presents a clear, vertical structure of power, with the king in a position of absolute authority, this is inverted by the typical epitaphic re-location of power into the hands of God and the reader. As we would expect from an epitaph, the text also carries direct implications for the reader's own moral and spiritual condition too: his interpretation will determine whether he himself follows 'ðone weg ... to heofonan rice'.

Across these later poetic passages of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, my reading has built a case for understanding them in terms of the particular traditions of epitaphic writing, though mixed with vernacular forms and conventions such as heroic diction and the elegiac imagery of exile, and the particular stylistic idioms of Old English or French-influenced medieval poetry. As an interpretative framework, the epitaph removes the need to force all these poems to conform to expectations of 'panegyric' or 'encomium', with any departures therefore dismissed as anomalous or symptomatic of the breakdown of Anglo-Saxon literary tradition. The generic category of the epitaph itself does not always fit neatly: in some cases, the presence of other generic markers and conventions may be stronger – perhaps, for example, in the 1036CD poem on the death of Alfred, with its evident debt to hagiographical and martyrological traditions. Yet the presence of epitaphic features can still be traced across all these texts, whether in their emphasis on models of exchange and economy, their involvement of the reader in processes of reckoning and judgement, or the strong imaginative sense of the 'here' where they locate their memorials. As 'poems on the grave' these epitaphs move from the locus of the tomb to the 'Her' of the annal, encountered as the reader traverses the text.

In the final section of this chapter, I want to draw together the various poetic passages in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle which relate to King Edgar (973ABC, 975ABC, 959DE, 975DE and 975D), enabling me to explore their differing treatments of the same figure and to consider ways in which the model of the epitaph

¹⁰⁵ Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, Book V, Chapter 7, pp. 470, 471. See the discussion of this passage, as well as Bede's opening letter to Ceolwulf, earlier in this chapter.

¹⁰⁶ Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, p. 251.

may facilitate new readings and insights. By far the most critical attention has focused on the more substantial of these poems, the 973 and 975ABC texts known as *The Coronation of Edgar* and *The Death of Edgar*, which will form my starting-point. The two poems are usually regarded as 'roughly contemporary' with the events they describe.¹⁰⁷ They may have circulated independently of the Chronicle, but the opening 'Her' in both poems is metrical, suggesting that they may have been composed specifically for the Chronicle or at least adapted expressly for this context.¹⁰⁸ The poems are usually read alongside each other, being placed directly together in all manuscripts where they are found,¹⁰⁹ and they may have been written as a pair to commemorate the two most significant events in the reign of the king: his coronation and death. The poems represent aspects of the early mythologisation of Edgar and the portrayal of his reign as a Golden Age of religious revival, peace and stability in Anglo-Saxon England.¹¹⁰ Mercedes Salvador-Bello regards the poems as examples of reformist propaganda, probably associated with one of the reformed Benedictine monastic centres,¹¹¹ a view shared by Jayne Carroll, who points to the association of the Chronicle manuscript B (the earliest copy of the poems) with Abingdon.¹¹² The poems are frequently interpreted as eulogies to Edgar as both king and, more specifically, as 'patron' of the tenth-century monastic reforms: Salvador-Bello describes the passages as 'flamboyant poetic piece[s]' which honour 'the major patron of monasticism' and Renée Trilling comments that, '[a]s patron of the Benedictine Reform, which established many of the houses and scriptoria responsible for the continuation of the Chronicle manuscripts, Edgar was naturally eulogized by the ecclesiastics who had benefited from his patronage and generosity'.¹¹³

The 973 and 975ABC poems have recently been explored by Salvador-Bello as 'praise-poetry', 'propaganda' or 'panegyric',¹¹⁴ and by Matthew Townend as 'praise-poetry', with particular attention to parallels with Skaldic verse in tenth- and early eleventh-century England. Jayne Carroll's reading of the poems nuances their usual interpretation as straightforward eulogy, arguing for greater emphasis on their religious, didactic dimension and contrasting them with their modification into more conventional secular panegyric in the Latin translations by Æthelweard.¹¹⁵ Indeed, both Carroll and Salvador-Bello have acknowledged that problems arise when *The*

¹⁰⁷ Mercedes Salvador-Bello, 'The Edgar Panegyrics in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*', in *Edgar, King of the English 959–975*, ed. Donald Scragg (Woodbridge, 2008), pp. 252–72, p. 255. For further discussion of the dating of the poems, see O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song*, p. 125.

¹⁰⁸ Salvador-Bello, 'The Edgar Panegyrics', p. 256.

¹⁰⁹ Carroll, 'Engla Waldend, Rex Admirabilis', p. 113.

¹¹⁰ See Simon Keynes, 'Edgar, rex admirabilis', in *Edgar, King of the English 959–975*, ed. Donald Scragg (Woodbridge, 2008), pp. 3–59, pp. 3–4, 10.

¹¹¹ Salvador-Bello, 'The Edgar Panegyrics', pp. 252–53, 263.

¹¹² Carroll, 'Engla Waldend, Rex Admirabilis', pp. 114, 132.

¹¹³ Salvador-Bello, 'The Edgar Panegyrics', p. 256; Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, p. 203.

¹¹⁴ Salvador-Bello, 'The Edgar Panegyrics', pp. 253, 257, 272 and *passim*; Matthew Townend, 'Pre-Cnut Praise-Poetry in Viking Age England', *The Review of English Studies* 51 (2000), 349–70.

¹¹⁵ Carroll, 'Engla Waldend, Rex Admirabilis', see especially the conclusions, p. 132. For the Æthelweard translation, see *The Chronicle of Æthelweard*, ed. A. Campbell (London, 1962), pp. 55–56.

Coronation of Edgar and *The Death of Edgar* are defined rigidly as panegyric or encomium.¹¹⁶ These difficulties have been especially acute in relation to the 'second section' of *The Death of Edgar* (from line 13 onwards), which appears to depart from the subject of Edgar's death in order to treat more standard, annalistic material within the verse format. The apparent problem that the poem wanders into 'recording without praising', detailing various other events of the year 975, has generated wide discussion and a range of attempts to explain why this might be the case.¹¹⁷ I would suggest that reading the 975ABC poem, in particular, with attention to the conventions of the epitaph may help to resolve some of the perceived stylistic and structural problems associated with the text, as well as offering new perspectives on many of its (sometimes perplexing) features and idioms.

The first twelve lines of the 975ABC poem on *The Death of Edgar* display many features which resonate with the conventions of epitaphic writing. First, the opening 'Her' (which, as already noted, is in this case integral to the poem's metre) calls attention to the text as a site of commemoration, suggesting once again the convergence between the traditional 'hic' of the epitaph and the formulaic annal structure of the Chronicle.¹¹⁸ The poem also focuses on concepts of exchange, as Edgar actively 'chooses' the light of heaven in place of earthly pleasures.

Her geendode eorðan dreamas
Eadgar Engla cing, ceas him oþer leoht,
wlitig ȝ wynsum, ȝ þis wace forlet,
lif þis læne.

Here Edgar, king of the English, ended earthly pleasures, chose for himself another light, radiant and delightful, and abandoned this feeble, this transitory life.

The image of Edgar seeking 'oþer leoht' recalls the conventional epitaphic motif of the departed soul moving up into the stars or celestial light as emblematic of heaven.¹¹⁹ The text then records the date of Edgar's death in an elaborate calculational passage, which is suggestive of the careful and prominent reckoning of time (whether the date of death, length of life, or reign as monarch or tenure in an ecclesiastical position) characteristic of epitaphs.

¹¹⁶ Carroll, 'Engla Waldend, Rex Admirabilis', pp. 115–16; Salvador-Bello, 'The Edgar Panegyrics', pp. 265 and 253, n. 3.

¹¹⁷ Townend, 'Pre-Cnut Praise Poetry', p. 353; see also Bredehoft, *Textual Histories*, pp. 104–5 and the overview of various critical responses to this apparent problem (and attempts to 'rescue' the poem as panegyric) in Carroll, 'Engla Waldend, Rex Admirabilis', pp. 113–15.

¹¹⁸ The text of the 973 and 975ABC poems varies very little across the manuscripts: see *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition: Vol. 3, MS A*, ed. Janet M. Bately (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 76–78; *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition: Vol. 4, MS B*, ed. Simon Taylor (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 55–56; *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Vol. 5, MS*, ed. O'Brien O'Keeffe, pp. 82–83. All quotations here are taken from Taylor's edition of MS B, as the earliest manuscript of the poems.

¹¹⁹ See for example Kajanto, *Classical and Christian*, pp. 59, 70 and several of the Latin epitaphs discussed in this chapter.

Nemnað leoda bearn,
 menn on moldan, þone monaþ gehwær
 on þisse eþeltyrf, þa þe ær wæron
 on rimcræfte rihte getogene,
 Iulius monð, þær se geonga gewat
 on þone eahtoðan dæg Eadgar of life,
 beorna beahgifa.

The children of nations, men on the earth everywhere on this native soil, who have been correctly trained in the art of reckoning, name the month July, on the eighth day, when the young Edgar, ring-giver of warriors, departed from life.

The first four lines of the poem have been identified by Thomas Hill as an example of what he terms the ‘variegated obit’ in Old English, which draws on a range of formulae derived from both vernacular and Christian Latin literary traditions in order to record death in a rhetorically-heightened and stylistically-varied way.¹²⁰ Hill compares these lines from *The Death of Edgar* to passages in other Old English texts including *Genesis A* and *Fates of the Apostles*, which use a range of formulae to refer to the deaths of virtuous figures such as saints and patriarchs. He notes that these Old English texts are ‘highly syncretic’, drawing on a range of literary models and traditions and exhibiting ‘the mutual influence of Old English and Anglo-Latin style’.¹²¹ Discussing Hill’s reading, Salvador-Bello suggests that the ‘variegated obit’ forms a ‘conventional obituary pattern that often applied to saints, bishops and other prominent characters’, and could be considered ‘a sub-type of the panegyric’.¹²² Yet the most striking generic overlap here is surely with the epitaph – a term which Hill does not use, but which provides parallels for much of the diction and imagery he identifies.

The range of literary traditions which Hill reminds us are assimilated in Old English poetry are clearly evident in the second section of *The Death of Edgar*, in which different generic models and conventions are drawn together. Whilst some commentators have expressed puzzlement at the way in which this section departs from panegyric conventions, Trilling argues that it is the ‘context of Edgar’s patronage of the Church that informs the remainder of the poem’, as it links the death of the monarch to the consequences and repercussions for the nation more widely.¹²³ Here the poem gives an overview of events associated with the ‘anti-monastic reaction’ following Edgar’s reign, including the backlash in Mercia, the death of Cyneweard, archbishop of Wells, and the banishment of Oslac.¹²⁴ Once again, we see here the function of the epitaph as a genre which seeks to ‘reinforce, but

¹²⁰ Hill, ‘The “Variegated Obit”’, pp. 116, 113.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 123–24.

¹²² Salvador-Bello, ‘Two Edgar Panegyrics’, p. 266.

¹²³ Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, pp. 206–7.

¹²⁴ For a seminal discussion of the supposed anti-monastic reaction, see D.J.V. Fisher, ‘The Anti-Monastic Reaction in the Reign of Edward the Martyr’, *Cambridge Historical Journal* 10 (1952), 254–70. See also the related discussion in Chapter 5 of this study, pp. 154–55.

also extend, challenge, and reshape prevailing cultural assumptions', in this case using the commemoration of Edgar's death to continue to promote the values and ideology of his monastic reforms in the face of contemporary opposition.¹²⁵ The poem devotes six lines to the exile of Oslac, a case concerning which, as Simon Keynes acknowledges, there remain many unknowns. Yet it seems that Oslac's departure from England is associated with the loss of Edgar's protection and the reaction against his reforming agenda.¹²⁶ As Jayne Carroll observes, the elegiac discourse of exile is highly prominent in these lines, recalling parallels in Old English poems such as *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*.¹²⁷ The poem includes the traditional trope of separation or deprivation, as the now-lordless Oslac is 'hama bereafod' ('bereft of homes'), using typical Old English poetic kennings for the sea, including 'ganotes bæð' ('gannet's bath') and 'hwæles eþel' ('whale's homeland'). This depiction of Oslac's exile 'ofer yþa' or 'ofer wætera geþring' ('across the waves', 'over the tumult of the waters') thus clearly signals its participation in vernacular modes of elegiac writing, appropriate in the context of this depiction of loss and misery following Edgar's death. The elegiac diction and imagery here is fitting for the mood of a poem which reflects on death, foregrounding themes of transience, separation and the ultimate power of God.¹²⁸ Whilst the 975ABC poem does not end with an explicit petition for prayers, nor with a direct return to the event of Edgar's death itself, it does once again privilege the concept of exchange which is integral to epitaphic writing. After the upheavals of 975 – including the anti-monastic reaction, the death or exile of prominent individuals, the disturbing appearance of a comet and widespread famine – the annal ends with God's restoration of prosperity to the English.

...þæt eft heofona weard
geþette, brego engla, geaf eft blisse gehwæm
egbuendra þurh eorðan wæstm.

...after that the Guardian of the heavens, Ruler of the angels, gave back bliss to each one of the island-dwellers, through the fruits of the earth.

The poem ends with this image of exchange or return, emphasising God's power both to punish and to reward. As part of its careful interlinking of monarch and kingdom, the text suggests ways in which Edgar's reward of bliss in heaven is part of the same process of divine reckoning which responds to the reactions and actions of his nation more widely. The 975ABC poem does not ask, explicitly, for a return of prayers, memory or esteem from the reader, yet this is clearly the purpose it fulfils in its

¹²⁵ See Scodel, *The English Poetic Epitaph*, p. 2.

¹²⁶ Keynes, 'Edgar, *rex admirabilis*', p. 57.

¹²⁷ See Carroll, 'Engla waldend, *rex admirabilis*', pp. 126–27.

¹²⁸ In fact the *Vita Oswaldi* chooses similar elegiac seafaring metaphors to describe the death of Edgar in 975, referring to the moment when 'decus ducum et totius Albionis imperator ex huius turbine mundi uariantis esset raptus atque naufrago salo fluctuantis mari ereptus' ('Edgar, the glory of his ealdormen and the ruler of all England, was taken from the turmoil of this ever-changing world and was snatched from the ship-wrecking waters of the swelling sea...'). See VSO, pp. 136, 137.

commemoration of Edgar and its reminder of the potentially far-reaching implications of the way in which he is remembered – or forgotten.

The Death of Edgar is clearly not a straightforward example of any single literary genre: just as the 975 (and 973) verses present Edgar as the ‘embodiment of cultural hybridity’ between Christian and Germanic traditions,¹²⁹ so the texts themselves draw on heroic diction, Christian Latin formulae, and the familiar vernacular imagery of exile. As Carroll comments, the translation of the poem in Æthelweard’s Latin *Chronicon* comes closer to a typical secular encomium, removing the elegiac section present in the vernacular source and concentrating more explicitly on the reign and death of Edgar himself.¹³⁰ Æthelweard’s interpretation of *The Death of Edgar* may also function more recognisably as a conventional Latin epitaph. Æthelweard employs Latin versions of the conventional epitaphic phrases found in the Old English, including ‘Lumina cernit altitonantis’ (‘he saw the light of him who thunders on high’), with its additional classicising imagery, and ‘spiramen reddit auctori / Telluris’ (‘gave back his spirit to the maker of the world’).¹³¹ The concept of exchange is further underlined by Æthelweard’s re-interpretation of the Old English depiction of Edgar as ‘beorna beahgifa’ (‘ring-giver of warriors’), presenting him as ‘Auri largus ... / Monarchus Britannum / Nobilis’ (‘the noble monarch of Britain generous with gold’),¹³² who is implicitly rewarded for his earthly generosity with bliss in heaven. Concepts of calculation and economy are also even more prevalent in Æthelweard’s Latin: the elaborate formulation of dates and times in his poem on *The Death of Edgar* has recently been explored as part of a ‘metrical experiment’ which seeks to make ‘words for numbers exhibit their value’.¹³³ This experimentation apparently extends to the numbers of words used to formulate dates, their placing, and the use of spaces within the text, suggesting Æthelweard’s aspirations to match form and content, and his participation in what could be understood as characteristically epitaphic processes of measurement and reckoning.¹³⁴ Whereas Æthelweard works firmly within a Latin idiom (though clearly experimenting in idiosyncratic ways with style and structure), the Old English poem on *The Death of Edgar* in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle appropriates models and motifs from a range of literary and cultural traditions, inter-weaving the epitaph with the elegy and the obit. But thinking specifically about the genre of the epitaph may be valuable for our reading, and may in addition help to foreground connections between *The Death of*

¹²⁹ Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, p. 204.

¹³⁰ Carroll, ‘*Engla waldend, rex admiribailis*’, pp. 127–32. For further discussion of the distinctive style of Æthelweard’s Chronicle, see Michael W. Winterbottom, ‘The Style of Æthelweard’, *Medium Ævum* 36 (1967), 109–18; D.R. Howlett, ‘The Verse of Æthelweard’s Chronicle’, *Bulletin Du Cange* 58 (2000), 219–24; Angelika Lutz, ‘Æthelweard’s *Chronicon* and Old English Poetry’, *ASE* 29 (2000), 177–214.

¹³¹ Text and translation from *The Chronicle of Æthelweard*, ed. Campbell, pp. 55, 56.

¹³² *The Chronicle of Æthelweard*, ed. Campbell, pp. 55, 56. I have added the translation of ‘Britannum’, which Campbell suggests ‘should be omitted for metre’ (p. 56, n. 5).

¹³³ Howlett, ‘The Verse of Æthelweard’s Chronicle’, 219–24, pp. 221–22.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 222. For the importance of linguistic ‘economy’ to the epitaph, see for example Carson, *Economy of the Unlost*, pp. 73–95.

Edgar and its companion piece in all manuscripts, the poem for 973 (ABC) on *The Coronation of Edgar*.

The Coronation of Edgar records the events of Edgar's coronation in 973, a crucial event in his reign which centred on his consecration into office and a range of symbolic enactments of his kingly and imperial roles.¹³⁵ Whilst Edgar had already reigned for over ten years, this elaborate coronation ceremony served a specific purpose as a public formulation of his power and authority. Catherine Karkov remarks that, '[t]he coronation is likely to have been intended first and foremost as a divinely sanctioned display of power as the culmination of a period in which the king had achieved monastic reform, monetary reform, and issued a new, and very severe, code of law'.¹³⁶ The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle poem's attention to the symbolic dimensions of Edgar's coronation, including his age at the time of the ceremony, the timing of the ritual, the emblematic associations of Bath as location, and other aspects, have been the focus of sustained and detailed critical discussion.¹³⁷ Whilst this is not the place to reproduce the detailed analyses of the poem, and its representation of Edgar's coronation, advanced by previous scholars, the text's interest in dating and calculation may again be worth re-appraising in the context of epitaphic writing, as *The Coronation of Edgar* sets up themes and motifs which are continued in the subsequent annal on the king's death. The poem's concern with dating has been seen even by sympathetic readers as 'cumbersome circumlocution' and as 'clumsy, even dull'.¹³⁸ Carroll interprets the lengthy dating formulae as part of the text's strategy of placing Edgar's reign within an apocalyptic time-frame and within a broader sweep of history which reminds readers of the transience of his earthly rule. She also comments on the way this technique anticipates the themes of transience and mortality which will become central in the following poem on *The Death of Edgar*.¹³⁹ Bredehoft relates the detailed dating to the importance of chronological thinking in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and its frequent moments of 'self-referentiality' which gather around allusions to the passing or definition of time.¹⁴⁰ The emphasis on dating and calculation here (the poem devotes over ten lines to its reckoning of the year of the coronation and Edgar's age) is characteristic of epitaphic writing, and suggests that the *Coronation of Edgar* may form part of an

¹³⁵ See for example Adrienne Jones, 'The Significance of the Regal Consecration of Edgar in 973', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 33 (1982), 375–90; Keynes, 'Edgar, *rex admirabilis*', pp. 48–49.

¹³⁶ Catherine E. Karkov, *The Ruler Portraits of Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 106–7.

¹³⁷ See for example, E. John, *Orbis Britanniae* (Leicester, 1966), pp. 276–89; Carroll, 'Engla waldend, *rex admirabilis*', p. 119; Salvador-Bello, 'Two Edgar Panegyrics', p. 254. In contrast to the usual emphasis placed on Edgar's age at the time of the coronation (about thirty, the minimum age for ordination), and the timing of the ceremony at Pentecost (a traditional time for baptism), Catherine Karkov cautions that some readings may be 'making too much of the evidence'. Karkov, *The Ruler Portraits*, p. 105.

¹³⁸ Carroll, 'Engla waldend, *rex admirabilis*', p. 119; Bredehoft, *Textual Histories*, p. 104.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 120–21.

¹⁴⁰ Bredehoft, *Textual Histories*, p. 104. This argument is also made by Janet Thormann, 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle Poems and the Making of the English Nation', in *Anglo-Saxonism and the Construction of Social Identity*, ed. A.J. Frantzen and J.D. Niles (Gainesville, 1997), pp. 60–85, p. 67.

extended epitaph for the king which reaches across annals 973 and 975ABC. Clearly, these two Anglo-Saxon Chronicle Edgar poems are not simply straightforward panegyric, but place Edgar within a precise historical context and within a system of religious values and learning. Crucially, as Jayne Carroll comments, '[t]he poet's presence is felt as a member of a learned Christian community against which Edgar's deeds are to be viewed and, it is implied, weighed'.¹⁴¹ The active processes of measurement, calculation and reckoning which both poems demand from the reader establish the familiar reciprocal dynamic of the epitaph, asking audiences to reflect upon and evaluate Edgar's role in English history.

Whilst *The Coronation of Edgar* and *The Death of Edgar* have received the most critical attention both as poems and as historical sources, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle also includes other poetic passages on Edgar which can be considered – some perhaps more persuasively – as versions of epitaphic writing. The poetic passage marking the death of Edgar in 975DE has been described as 'either an entirely separate composition from the 975ABC poem ... or else it was a conscious rewriting of the 975ABC poem'.¹⁴² Although the poem is less metrically regular than the ABC verses, Thomas Bredehoft has argued that it is more representative of the themes of Anglo-Saxon Chronicle verse in general, focusing on the celebration of a king and excluding from the poetic section further material on the other events of the year.¹⁴³ The poem records Edgar's power as king and represents part of the early process of mythologisation of the peace and stability of his rule.¹⁴⁴ The image of the 'ganetes bað' ('gannet's bath') appears here not in an elegiac setting, but as part of a depiction of the imperial power of Edgar which reaches 'geond feola þeoda' ('across many peoples').¹⁴⁵ The 975DE poem includes none of the conventional features of the epitaph – whether formulae referring to the death of the subject, themes of economy and reckoning or appeals for memory and prayer – and seems to function straightforwardly as an encomiastic record of the king's reign. Alongside this short poem on the death of Edgar, 975D also has an additional poetic passage which has been identified as 'Wulfstanian' in style, together with the poetic passage in 959DE. These passages were probably introduced to the Chronicle in the early eleventh century, either by Wulfstan, archbishop of York, himself, or perhaps by another author adopting the same style.¹⁴⁶ These additions represent a later, northern (and more fundamentally ecclesiastical or religious) perspective on Edgar's reign, written in the context of renewed Viking attacks on the north of England and with a hindsight view of Edgar's political and monastic policies.¹⁴⁷ Bredehoft defines both the 975D and 959DE passages as verse, based on metrical analysis, but it is enough

¹⁴¹ Carroll, 'Engla waldend, rex admirabilis', p. 122.

¹⁴² Bredehoft, *Textual Histories*, p. 105.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ For this portrayal of Edgar's reign see Keynes, 'Edgar, rex admirabilis', p. 10.

¹⁴⁵ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Vol. 7, MS E*, ed. Irvine, p. 59 (presented as verse); see also the text in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Vol. 6, MS D*, ed. Cubbin, p. 47.

¹⁴⁶ See Karl Jost, 'Wulfstan und die angelsächsische Chronik', *Anglia* 47 (1923), 105–23.

¹⁴⁷ See Keynes, 'Edgar, rex admirabilis', pp. 56–57; Salvador-Bello, 'Two Edgar Panegyrics', p. 271; Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, p. 242.

to consider them consciously 'poetic' in nature, through an intensive use of alliteration and internal rhyme which marks them out from the more typical annalistic prose.¹⁴⁸ The 975D passage focuses on the 'anti-monastic reaction' following Edgar's reign, reading as a robust judgement condemning the 'fela unrihta ȝ yfelra' ('many wrongs and evils') of the period, which 'aa ... yfelode swiðe' ('always got much worse').¹⁴⁹

Perhaps more intriguing is the 959DE poetic passage, which chooses the locus of the beginning of Edgar's reign (as king of both Mercia and Wessex, following Eadwig's death) as a site for reviewing his entire life and kingship. The text has presented some challenges for modern readers, with Mercedes Salvador-Bello commenting on its partially critical tone, and Simon Keynes writing that '[p]erhaps the most difficult problem is to understand what Wulfstan, archbishop of York (1002–23), had in mind when he expressed a significant reservation in the short account of Edgar inserted into the "northern recension" of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*'.¹⁵⁰ Clearly, the poetic passage of 959DE does not conform to expectations of panegyric or laudatory verse. Yet it does include a number of prominent stylistic and thematic features which promote its interpretation as a poetic epitaph for Edgar, inviting appraisal and judgement of his life and reign. The poetic passage begins by focusing on the peace and prosperity of Edgar's reign and his piety as a king. It measures Edgar against preceding kings, declaring that he

...folces frið bette swiðost þara cyninga
þe ær him gewurde be manna gemynde.

...improved the security of the people more than any of those kings who were before him, according to the memory of the people.¹⁵¹

The text is also careful to establish that he merited or earned such reputation and esteem (he 'earnode þes georne', 'earned all this completely'), suggesting from the start the poem's function as an exacting, rigorous account which tallies the positives and negatives of Edgar's reign. The passage then moves on to catalogue further virtues and achievements of Edgar, culminating in a catalogue of his righteous actions.

He weaðð wide geond þeodland swiðe geweorðað,
forþam þe he weorðode Godes naman georne
ȝ Godes lage smeade oft ȝ gelome
ȝ Godes lof rærde wide ȝ side
ȝ wislice rædde oftost a simle
for Gode ȝ for worulde eall his þeode.

¹⁴⁸ Bredehoft, *Textual Histories*, p. 107. In a note to his edition of 975D, Cubbin comments that '[t]here are more capitals than normal in this annal, but no explicit marks of verse'. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Vol. 6, MS D*, ed. Cubbin, p. 47, n. 3.

¹⁴⁹ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Vol. 6, MS D*, ed. Cubbin, p. 47.

¹⁵⁰ Salvador-Bello, 'Two Edgar Panegyrics', p. 271; Keynes, 'Edgar, *rex admirabilis*', p. 56.

¹⁵¹ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Vol. 7, MS E*, ed. Irvine, p. 56. All quotations from the 959DE poetic passage are taken from this edition.

He became greatly honoured widely throughout the nation, because he eagerly honoured God's name and meditated on God's law often and diligently, and promoted God's praise far and wide, and counselled all his nation very wisely, very often indeed, for God and for the world.

Here the poem continues to show an equal concern with both Edgar's actions and his reputation: these lines tally his virtues, consistently linking them to the resulting honour and respect which Edgar wins from his people. Wulfstan's verse clearly envisions a symbolic economy between king and the nation, ruler and people, virtue and honour, in which Edgar's achievements are rewarded appropriately with prosperity and esteem during his lifetime.

The final lines of the 959DE passage, however, change in tone to highlight a significant shortcoming of Edgar's reign, as perceived by Wulfstan in the early eleventh century. The text asserts that:

Ane misdæda he dyde þeah to swiðe,
 þet he ælþeodige unsida lufode
 ȝ hæðene þeawas innan þysan lande gebrohte to fæste
 ȝ utlāndisce hider in tihte
 ȝ deoriende leoda bespeon to þysan earde.

One bad deed, however, he did too much, in that he loved bad, foreign customs, and brought heathen manners too fast into this land, and attracted strangers here, and introduced a dangerous people to this country.

These lines form a catalogue, with the same listing of points joined by repeated 'and', which balances the account of Edgar's virtues in the preceding lines. Simon Keynes has discussed this passage, commenting on the context within which Wulfstan was writing, and suggesting that this text may point to a tenth-century phenomenon for which modern historians have no surviving evidence.

The references to 'evil foreign customs', 'heathen manners', 'foreigners' and 'harmful people' appear in combination to indicate that [Wulfstan] had the Danes firmly in mind, and that he regarded the renewal of Viking raids during Æthelred's reign as in some way a consequence of whatever Edgar had done to encourage them hither. The implication seems to be that there was a significant movement of people from Scandinavia (and perhaps from Denmark in particular) to England in the 960s and 970s, of a nature and wider circumstances wholly unknown.¹⁵²

Whilst the specific motivations and background to Wulfstan's comments remain unknown, the criticisms in 959DE could also be read as part of a more traditional censure of excess and concern with the virtue of measure in Old English texts (on both religious and heroic themes): Edgar's failing here may be primarily that he allowed himself to act 'to swiðe' in one area of his rule. Strikingly, however, this section of the 959DE poetic passage cannot be read as laudatory or encomiastic,

¹⁵² Keynes, 'Edgar, *rex admirabilis*', p. 57.

undermining any assumption that the Chronicle's commemorations of kings can be gathered neatly together within the genre of panegyric. Instead, the 959DE annal sets Edgar's failings against his achievements with stark clarity.

The 959DE poetic passage concludes with an appeal on behalf of Edgar's soul.

Ac God him geunne þæt his gode dæda
 swyðran weardan þonne misdæda
 his sawle to gescyldnesse on langsuman syðe.

But God grant him that his good deeds may be worth more than his misdeeds,
 to shield his soul on the long journey.

The annal thus ends with a powerful image of reckoning, alluding to the symbolic scales which weigh the human soul after death and which have formed the structuring principle for the poem's balanced account of Edgar's virtues and failings.¹⁵³ The text presents many positives and emphatically just one ('ane') shortcoming, suggesting that although an eleventh-century perspective may recognise failings in Edgar's policies, his life and reign can still be measured and not found wanting. Whilst the final lines appeal directly to God, the text also implicitly asks the reader to engage in the same process of reckoning and judgement, interrogating its account of Edgar's life. The passage presents a more complex hermeneutic challenge than straightforward panegyric, instead asking the reader to reflect and evaluate in the way typical of an epitaph. Edgar is presented as both an exalted exemplum of kingly virtue, and as a subject laid bare for scrutiny, with the reader's response bringing implications both for his soul (through the possibility of prayer) and for his earthly fate in terms of fame, reputation and historical judgement. In this eleventh-century addition to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, power transfers from Edgar as king into the process of critical reception and memory. Edgar is not merely the elevated recipient of panegyric, but is located as the subject of evaluation, moral judgement and reckoning, at the centre of a complex exchange between present and past, dead and living, text and reader.

The epitaphic writing on Edgar in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is more complex than the later poetic epitaphs in 979DE, 1036CD, 1065CD and 1086E. *The Death of Edgar* and *The Coronation of Edgar* are especially multi-layered as longer, sustained pieces which draw in tropes from a range of genres and literary traditions. Wulfstan's epitaph for Edgar in 959DE could similarly be argued to combine epitaphic writing with the conventions of homiletic and hortatory literature. But, together, these poetic passages do the typical work of the epitaph by asking the reader to pause and engage in a process of heightened attention, reflection and reckoning.¹⁵⁴ These texts function differently from straightforward panegyric or eulogy – although they do, of course,

¹⁵³ The symbolic scales of divine justice are a common feature in early medieval art. See for example Milton McC. Gatch, 'Miracles in architectural settings: Christ Church, Canterbury and St Clement's, Sandwich in the Old English *Vision of Leofric*', *ASE* 22 (1993), 227–52, p. 249.

¹⁵⁴ Renée Trilling suggests that, following the conventions of medieval prosimetrical literature, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle employs poems at 'moments of high emotional investment in praise songs and death laments'. See Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, p. 181.

include laudatory elements. Instead, their central concern is with epitaphic processes of exchange and reckoning, enabling them to acknowledge the limitations and vulnerabilities of earthly power (as in *The Death of Edgar*) and the failings of the dead subject (as in 959DE) as well as their virtues and achievements. The idea of weighing up and of distanced and detached evaluation seems even more prominent in the manuscripts of the northern recension, perhaps to be expected due to their different point of view in terms of region and historical moment. Overall, these epitaphic passages on Edgar ask for the reader's reckoning and judgement, but also for generosity and respect.

All epitaphic writing asks the reader to reflect upon himself as well as the dead subject memorialised in the text, yet this dynamic is even more acute in the case of an epitaph on a ruler. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's poetic epitaphs for kings do additional ideological work in terms of the processes of reckoning and judgement they invite from the reader. Recent studies by Catherine Karkov have explored the concept of the king's 'two bodies', calling attention to the ways in which contemporary representations of Edgar suggest the symbolic association between the body of the king and that of the wider nation.¹⁵⁵ In her examination of the frontispiece to the *Regularis Concordia* (British Library MS Cotton Tiberius A.iii) in her book *The Ruler Portraits of Anglo-Saxon England*, Karkov suggests that its depiction of Edgar's body, intersected by a horizontal scroll, suggests its dual nature as both human, earthly and material, as well as sacral and symbolic of eternal, divinely-anointed power and authority.¹⁵⁶ Karkov nuances this reading in her later essay 'The Frontispiece to the New Minster Charter and the King's Two Bodies', arguing instead that the king's dual identity is at once 'individual and corporate', and considering how the king's body 'might have come to stand not just for the man himself, but for the church he refounded' and ultimately, by extension, for the nation itself.¹⁵⁷ The poetic epitaphs for Edgar – and other rulers – in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle represent textual sites of interment and commemoration, where the king's body is symbolically sited and contemplated. As Karkov's readings suggest, reflecting upon the body of the king – along with the wider events, achievements or shortcomings of his reign – involves the reader in a simultaneous engagement with the story of the nation, as the communal body headed by its ruler. The act of scrutinising the kings memorialised in the poetic epitaphs of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle implies a process of reckoning for the nation itself, and for the individual reader as a member of this imagined English community. In the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, as in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, the genre of epitaphic verse is appropriated as a kind of national writing, in which the textual site of a ruler's death is defined and marked as a specific 'here' where the wider corporate story can be epitomised and examined. Whilst epitaphs always present individual lives as exempla,

¹⁵⁵ Karkov's work draws on – and modifies – the seminal work by E. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton, 1957).

¹⁵⁶ Karkov, *The Ruler Portraits*, p. 95.

¹⁵⁷ Catherine E. Karkov, 'The Frontispiece to the New Minster Charter and the King's Two Bodies', in *Edgar, King of the English 959–975*, ed. Donald Scragg (Woodbridge, 2008), pp. 224–41, pp. 239–40.

demanding the reader's moral engagement and self-evaluation as well as scrutiny of the subject, an epitaph for a king generates an even more complex, tight economy of inter-relationship and reciprocity, with the reader himself incorporated into its memorial.

This analysis of the poetic epitaphs of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle extends our understanding of the dynamics of hierarchy and economy imbricated in Anglo-Saxon formulations and representations of power. Together, these poetic texts commemorate kings and their achievements as rulers, often emphasising their roles as patrons, benefactors or founders. They do include many laudatory, panegyric elements, but a reading which pays attention to the particular generic model of the epitaph enables recognition of the very specific processes of exchange and economy which they initiate and sustain. In the poetic epitaphs of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, these systems of economy centre and pivot around the reader and his active reception and reciprocation of the text. Fundamentally concerned with concepts of exchange and return, the epitaph conventionally asks the reader for attention, reckoning and judgement, resulting in prayer, memory and esteem, or potentially in disapprobation. The Chronicle epitaphs thus maintain a shifting, ambivalent hierarchy: their royal subjects are further elevated through the process of textual memorialisation and are offered as an exemplum to the reader, yet they are simultaneously dependent on the reader's scrutiny, reckoning and response. In microcosm, the Chronicle epitaphs suggest the complex reciprocal systems by which power must always be sanctioned and maintained, relying upon processes of acknowledgement and return. They also, perhaps more significantly, suggest how texts can create sites in which carefully-cued processes of reception enable the reader to enact and engage with those very dynamics of hierarchy and economy which shape their wider social and historical context.

‘Absens ero ... presens ero’: Writing the Absent Patron

Part III, Chapter 3 of the *Vita Sancti Oswaldi* gives an account of how Oswald, in Fleury to learn about the reformed monastic life there, is recalled to England by his dying uncle, Archbishop Oda of Canterbury.¹ The delivery of Oda’s message takes place in the public sphere of the monastery, the ‘ueredarios’ (‘messengers’) from England bringing with them ‘immensis muneribus’ (‘immense gifts’) as a material demonstration of friendship and a reminder of Oswald’s obligations to his uncle and patron.² The request for Oswald’s return is explicitly addressed to the whole of the monastic community at Fleury: ‘humili preci flagitabant presulem illius loci omnisque caterue congregationem, ut filium ad patrem dirigerent antequam ex hac uita transiret’ (‘in humble petition they asked the abbot of Fleury and all its congregation of monks, that they might return the son to his father before he [Oda] departed from this life’).³ The decision about Oswald’s departure also seems to be communal, with the abbot taking counsel (‘consilio’), ‘cum commisso sibi agmine et sancta plebe Christi’ (‘together with his charges and all his Christian flock’).⁴ When Oswald subsequently takes his leave of Fleury for England, the scene is one of public, demonstrative behaviour and performative speech which ties the monks and the saint together in an enduring bond.

...alii flebant, alii gemitabant; non mirabiliter contritasti sunt. Sed felix frater eorum gemitibus condoluit, quibus optauit Domini consolationis auxilium: ‘Si enim’, inquit ille, ‘absens ero uobis corporea uisione, presens ero mentis dilectione, quia pleniter uestram habeo gratiam benedictionis.’

...some wept, others wailed: not surprisingly, they were much saddened. But the blessed monk Oswald had sympathy with their laments: he wished on their behalf for comfort from the Lord of consolation: ‘If’, he said, ‘I shall be absent

¹ For an overview of Oswald’s stay in Fleury, see John Nightingale, ‘Oswald, Fleury and continental reform’, in *St Oswald of Worcester: Life and Influence*, ed. Nicholas Brooks and Catherine Cubitt (Leicester, 1996), pp. 23–45.

² *VSO*, iii.3, pp. 54, 55.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 54–57.

from you in bodily appearance, I shall be present among you in my mind's affection, because I am in full possession of the favour of your blessing.⁵

This passage from the *Vita* deploys a range of rhetorical strategies to assert the bond between Oswald and the monks of Fleury, including the use of affective language, epistolary conventions, metaphor and the written representation of non-verbal demonstrative behaviour and ritualised gesture. These textual devices, along with questions of the text's broader cultural context, will be analysed in detail later in this chapter. Immediately, however, this excerpt calls attention to the potential problem of absence, and the threat to alliances and affiliations posed by physical separation and remoteness. Yet the *Vita Sancti Oswaldi* also demonstrates the crucial role played by texts in overcoming this potential difficulty. Here, the *Vita* constructs an imagined community which functions across space and physical distance, writing Oswald and the monks of Fleury into a vital, active economy of relationship and mutual obligation.

Changes to political and ecclesiastical structures in later tenth-century England suggest that the problem of personal absence would have been increasingly relevant and acute within a range of contexts. Historians have long noted the growth of more centralised structures of power, administration and patronage in the period, visible in the ideology and organisation of the Benedictine reform and the governance and endowment of the new monastic houses, and in the promotion of the ideal, and, to an extent, the political reality, of the unified kingdom of England.⁶ In these systems of organisation, whilst local representatives and administrative structures operated within the immediate community, the ultimate ruler or patron figure was increasingly distant and removed from the ordinary business of provincial government.⁷ Of course, systems of organisation which incorporated communities separated by physical distance were not an innovation in the late tenth century. The development of a 'kingdom of the English' with an ideology of centralised power and authority continued the projects and ambitions of Æthelstan in the early tenth century.⁸ In the monastic sphere, groups or colonies of houses associated with a

⁵ VSO, iii.3, pp. 55, 56.

⁶ See for example Pauline Stafford, 'King and kin, lord and community: England in the tenth and eleventh century', in her *Gender, Family and the Legitimation of Power: England from the Ninth to the Early Twelfth Century* (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 1–33, esp. p. 1.

⁷ See for example the discussion of the extension of the administrative model of shires and hundreds beyond Wessex in the late tenth century in Steven Bassett, 'The administrative landscape of the diocese of Worcester in the tenth century', in *Oswald of Worcester*, ed. Nicholas Brooks and Catherine Cubitt (Leicester, 1996), pp. 147–73; or that on the role of ealdormen in Donald Bullough, 'St Oswald: monk, bishop and archbishop', *ibid.*, pp. 1–22, esp. p. 9. Bullough notes that, like their counterparts in Ottonian Germany, Anglo-Saxon monarchs managed the more distant provinces of their kingdom through 'the entrusting of wide-ranging and probably loosely defined responsibilities to a small number of men, chosen particularly from those related to them by blood or marriage into their family – in England, the ealdormen'.

⁸ On Æthelstan's ambitions and cultural programme see Sarah Foot, 'The Making of *Angelynn*: English Identity before the Norman Conquest', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 6 (1996), 25–49, esp. pp. 47–48, and Mechthild Gretsch, *Ælfric and the Cult of Saints in Late Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 2005), Chapter 3, 'Cuthbert: from Northumbrian saint to saint of all England', pp. 65–126.

central institution had existed for centuries, including most notably the 'Wilfridian affinity' of the seventh century which brought a number of monasteries under the 'personal dominion' of Wilfrid of York.⁹ Yet Sarah Foot finds the Wilfridian model, together with the celebrated '*Medeshamstede* federation', to be an exception, with most other relationships between monastic houses before the Benedictine reform seemingly based on much looser, vaguer and non-explicitly defined connections.¹⁰ By contrast, a large number of re-founded monastic houses in the tenth century enjoyed royal patronage, or governance and endowment by key figures of the Benedictine reform. These new ideological and administrative models tied monasteries to ultimate patrons and authorities which lay beyond the local community – traditionally their primary source of material support and political influence. Across both secular and sacred spheres, then, systems of power and patronage in the later tenth century included a more self-conscious, concerted ideology of centralised authority and more instances in which the ultimate patron or ruler might be an absent, distant figure, largely removed from local contexts and the normal experience of their dependents.

The challenges of absent rule or patronage are not unique to Anglo-Saxon England in this period but extend, in differing and nuanced ways, into continental Europe. Whilst the general consensus of modern historians is that Anglo-Saxon England had a more developed system of central administration, which exploited strategies such as the extensive use of written documentation and a regulated coinage in order to demonstrate and enact (absent) royal power,¹¹ monarchic rule in Ottonian Germany was based on the practice of 'itinerant kingship', which used personal visits to locations within the kingdom as the basis for exercising authority and government.¹² In continental Europe, 'the Ottonian and Salian kings used the royal itinerary to combine the symbolic and sacral nature of their kingship with the political and judicial aspects',¹³ with the journey or *iter* bringing together both ceremonial or ritual and practical, administrative elements. Rather than the highly-developed literate systems of administration used in Anglo-Saxon England, Ottonian rulers relied more

⁹ Sarah Foot, *Monastic Life in Anglo-Saxon England, c. 600–900* (Cambridge, 2006), Part II, Chapter 6, 'Dependencies, affinities, clusters', pp. 251–80, p. 258. More generally (and less specifically relevant to this discussion), proponents of the 'minster hypothesis' of ecclesiastical organisation in earlier Anglo-Saxon England would argue for a model of clusters of churches and chapels managed by a central monastic community, which would lead pastoral care over a particular area, and would suggest some degree of centralised authority (albeit at a relatively local level). See for example *Minsters and Parish Churches: The Local in Transition, 950–1200*, ed. John Blair (Oxford, 1988); *Pastoral Care Before the Parish*, ed. John Blair and Richard Sharpe (Leicester, 1992); David Rollason and Eric Cambridge, 'Debate: The pastoral organization of the Anglo-Saxon Church: a review of the "Minster hypothesis"', *Early Medieval Europe* 4 (1995), 87–104.

¹⁰ Foot, *Monastic Life*, pp. 280–82.

¹¹ See for example, K.J. Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society: Ottonian Saxony* (London, 1979), p. 106, or James Campbell, 'Observations on English Government from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century', in his *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London, 1986), pp. 155–70.

¹² This was also still a feature of kingship in tenth-century England (see Keynes, 'Edgar, *rex admirabilis*', p. 10), but seems to have been more central to the exercise of power in continental Europe.

¹³ Only a brief overview of the continental context can be offered here. For further discussion, see for example John W. Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship and Royal Monasteries in Early Medieval Germany, c. 936–1075* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 48.

heavily on the use of non-verbal communication and demonstrative behaviour, enacting their power visually within the public sphere and relying on complex networks of personal relationship and loyalty.¹⁴ Royal monasteries played an important part in facilitating this practice of itinerant kingship and personal visitation, often hosting the king as well as acting as regional centres of royal power (countering the ambitions of the local nobility) in the periods of monarchic absence.¹⁵ Yet the king's frequent physical absence presented a major challenge for the continuous exertion of his power and authority. John W. Bernhardt comments that 'real problems arose when the ruler was absent from the areas of his domain, which he regularly visited' and that 'long absences brought on the greatest evils'.¹⁶ Similarly, Karl Leyser observes that 'itineracy was the lot of kings, long absence the great evil'.¹⁷ So, whilst the wider political landscape of continental Europe was very different from that of tenth-century Anglo-Saxon England (John Bernhardt, for example, stresses the nature of Ottonian Germany as a 'decentralized' realm),¹⁸ issues of power, patronage and personal presence and absence were also acutely relevant and emotive there – and perhaps even more so.

The broader continental European context is particularly relevant to the discussion of textual representations of absent patrons in this chapter. The evidence for cultural exchange between England and the continent in the late tenth century has been examined by a wide range of scholars, often with particular attention to the development of reformed monasticism in both regions.¹⁹ Cultural connections between Anglo-Saxon England and north-western Europe included monastic visits for the purposes of learning and teaching (as exemplified by the account in the *Vita Sancti Oswaldi*, cited above), the exchange of letters and texts, and collaboration between English and continental houses (or individual monks) in enforced circumstances of exile or politically-necessitated retreat.²⁰ The texts examined in this

¹⁴ See for example Gerd Althoff, *Spielregeln der Politik im Mittelalter: Kommunikation in Frieden und Fehde* (Darmstadt, 1997), esp. 'Demonstration und Inszenierung: Spielregeln der Kommunikations in mittelalterlicher Öffentlichkeit', pp. 229–57, and Gerd Althoff, 'The Variability of Rituals in the Middle Ages', in *Medieval Concepts of the Past: Ritual, Memory, Historiography*, ed. Gerd Althoff et al. (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 71–88.

¹⁵ See for example Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship*, p. 290 or Timothy Reuter, *Medieval Politics and Modern Mentalities*, ed. Janet L. Nelson (Cambridge, 2006), Chapter 18, 'The "imperial church system" of the Ottonian and Salian rulers: a reconsideration', pp. 325–54. Reuter emphasises that this royal influence over monasteries was not as 'consistent or systematic' as that involved in the Benedictine reform in England, or earlier in Carolingian Europe (p. 354).

¹⁶ Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship*, pp. 53 and 48.

¹⁷ Leyser, *Rule and Conflict*, p. 103.

¹⁸ Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship*, p. 50.

¹⁹ See for example, James Campbell, 'England, France, Flanders and Germany in the Reign of Ethelred II: some comparisons and connections', in his *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History*, pp. 191–208; Nightingale, 'Oswald, Fleury and continental reform', pp. 23–45; D.A. Bullough, 'The Continental Background of the Reform', in *Tenth-Century Studies. Essays in Commemoration of the Millennium of the Council of Winchester and Regularis Concordia* (London, 1975), pp. 20–36; Steven Vanderputten, 'Canterbury and Flanders in the late tenth century', *ASE* 35 (2006), 219–44.

²⁰ The two most prominent examples of this are the exile of Dunstan to Ghent and Abbo of Fleury's stay at Ramsey, both discussed later in this chapter.

chapter reflect these cultural exchanges and cross-currents. Indeed, the instances of absence which they represent are themselves, in varying ways, products of the frequent travel and cultural traffic between England and the continent in the late tenth century. The main focus here will be on excerpts from the *Vita Sancti Oswaldi* by Byrhtferth of Ramsey, the two earliest Lives of Dunstan by the authors 'B' and Adelard, and selected poems by Abbo of Fleury including both those collected within the *Vita Oswaldi* as well as others from different sources. All of these texts engage with issues of personal absence and employ particular rhetorical strategies to articulate and legitimise the power and efficacy of the patron, even whilst physically distant or removed. These texts also all have strong continental associations (whether continental authors, influences, or suggested connections) and show the influence of continental European ideas and conventions on representations of Anglo-Saxon patrons. Finally, the politics of absence play an important role in the circumstances of their production. Whether as an appeal to an absent patron, an attempt to secure patronage from a remote figure, or part of a strategy to renew and re-assert former cross-institutional connections and associations, each of these texts has a vested interest in promoting the efficacy, value and obligations of patronage across the separation of physical space.

This chapter will identify and analyse the particular textual and rhetorical strategies deployed in these texts to represent the absent patron and to assert his power and authority. The selected texts deliberately span a range of genres, including prose hagiography (the *Vita Sancti Oswaldi* and the two Lives of St Dunstan) and panegyric verse (the poetry of Abbo of Fleury, including in particular his work in the acrostic form). This survey across genres enables us to trace similarities and divergences across the texts, examining the strategies deployed in different textual modes to address the issue of absent patronage, and identifying genre-specific features and nuances. In the hagiographic material, prominent techniques include the use of affective language, epistolary conventions and the description of demonstrative behaviour. In the poetry, the power of the absent patron is represented more frequently through the use of metaphor – often highly extended and sustained – and the use of elaborate textual conceits. In particular, the poetic sources develop imagery of light and radiance to suggest the power of the absent patron. This imagery of shining light transcends physical space and collapses distance to represent the patron's far-reaching power, authority and virtue. Of course, similar metaphors are familiar from many early medieval texts, where they are conventionally used to represent sanctity and fame. But the examples examined here suggest a specific rhetorical deployment of this imagery to signify the power of the (absent) patron. Most striking in the poetry by Abbo of Fleury, the use of imagery of shining light intersects with his interest and learning in astronomy as well as wider continental panegyric conventions and representational traditions. Economies of light, vision and reflection mirror the complex inter-relationships and exchanges between patrons and clients, authors and addressees, textual gifts and their recipients, manuscripts and readers.

The account of Oswald's departure from Fleury in the *Vita Sancti Oswaldi* provides a useful starting-point for exploring the textual strategies employed by

hagiographic writing to meet the challenge of the absent patron. Obviously, Oswald's role at Fleury itself was not that of patron, but rather of learner gathering experience of reformed, regular monasticism. The text tells us that:

Coepit more sancte monastice legis memoriter agnoscere et ecclesiastica digniter officia retinere, desiderans (Domino clementi annuente) in patria docere suis que extra proprium solum didicit ab extraneis.

According to the custom of monastic law, he began to memorize and duly to master the monastic offices, desiring – with the Lord's merciful support – to teach those things which he had learned from stranger abroad to his own people at home.²¹

Even whilst Oswald is the pupil at Fleury, the text reminds of us of his future role as teacher and patron within the Benedictine reform in England, and emphasises his special spiritual gifts and devotion.²² For the late Anglo-Saxon readers of the *Vita Sancti Oswaldi*, Oswald is the central patron figure throughout the text. Yet Michael Lapidge comments that the original intended or commissioning audience of the *Vita* is not clear. He remarks that:

Because much of the Life concerns Ramsey and Oswald's role in its foundation, one might suspect that the *uos* who are addressed in the *Prologus* are the monks of Ramsey; but it is equally possible that the intended audience was the community of Benedictine monks at St Mary's, Worcester. (Perhaps Byrhtferth's ambiguity is intentional.)²³

As Lapidge suggests, Byrhtferth may maintain a deliberate ambiguity here, negotiating Oswald's multiple roles as patron and keeping open the potential audiences and commemorative uses of the text.²⁴ Byrhtferth himself, of course, was a member of the community at Ramsey, and later its *magister scholae*, having himself been taught by Abbo of Fleury during his period at Ramsey in 985 to 987.

The Fleury connection is clearly celebrated in the *Vita Oswaldi* account of Oswald's period there. The monastery of Fleury-sur-Loire is described in aureate terms as a place where:

...florent filii Floriacensis monasterii nitidius sole, pulchrius liliis, rubicundius rosis; qui norunt Deo offerri flores et fructus qui permanent, et absque termino inmarcessibiliter cum Deo florere ualeant in perpetuas aeternitates...

²¹ VSO, iii.2, pp. 54, 55.

²² See also VSO, ii.9, pp. 50, 51, where Byrhtferth remarks that, in joining Ramsey as a pupil, Oswald 'multis satagebat prodesse bono exemplo sancti propositi' ('undertook to be of benefit to many people through the good example of his holy undertaking').

²³ VSO, p. lxxiii.

²⁴ Julia Barrow suggests that the *Vita* was written for Worcester, but was designed 'at the same time to remind them that Ramsey Abbey (given a prominent role in the narrative) had its own claim to Oswald'. See Julia Barrow, 'Demonstrative behaviour and political communication in later Anglo-Saxon England', *ASE* 36 (2007), 127–50, p. 133.

...the sons of the monastery of Fleury flourish more brightly than the sun, more beautifully than lilies, redder than roses; these monks know how to offer to God flowers and fruits which endure, and which are able to flourish unwitheringly in God without end for perpetual eternities...²⁵

In these panegyric lines, Byrhtferth commemorates a double experience of patronage: both the learning and spiritual refinement gained by Oswald during his stay at Fleury, and his own indirect debt to Fleury, through the teaching of Abbo at Ramsey. Fleury itself is imagined, in conventional terms, as a father or patron figure whose 'filii' ('sons') serve God and exemplify the monastic life. Byrhtferth maintains the present tense to comment that 'ex quibus est pretiosus Christi famulus de quo locuti sumus' ('and numbered among these monks is the precious servant of Christ who is the subject of our narrative'), suggesting that Oswald's affiliation with Fleury is continuing and eternal, not marred by physical absence or even death. Byrhtferth's celebration of Fleury asserts the prestigious associations between himself, Oswald, Ramsey and this illustrious abbey, perpetuating these economies of allegiance and obligation through the text itself.

Michael Lapidge warns readers of the *Vita Sancti Oswaldi* that 'extreme caution [should] be applied by anyone wishing to use the *Vita s. Oswaldi* as a record of tenth-century history'.²⁶ He comments that:

Given Byrhtferth's veneration for Oswald, and the narrow time-span separating Oswald's death from the composition of the *vita*, we might expect the *vita* to be pregnant with personal recollections of Oswald's character, and of his 'spirit of the fear of the Lord'. Our expectations would be frustrated...²⁷

Instead, Lapidge demonstrates that Byrhtferth 'relied very heavily, if not exclusively, on written sources during the composition of the *Vita s. Oswaldi*'.²⁸ The scene of Oswald's departure from Fleury in Part III, Chapter 3 of the *Vita* exemplifies the highly textual, stylised, allusive nature of the *Vita Sancti Oswaldi* as a whole. Whilst Lapidge identifies only one conventional collocation within this chapter ('inito consilio', which he describes as 'a biblical phrase' and also has precedents in classical and medieval Latin literature),²⁹ the passage is carefully built on a series of key metaphors and resonates with a range of early medieval rhetorical traditions and ideologies.

Most strikingly, this passage is marked by strongly affective language which unites Oswald and the community of Fleury in an intense, intimate shared experience. Yet, as noted above, this is also a public scene and the language used is also highly conventional, engaging with recognisable tropes and idioms. Whilst the monks of Fleury wail and groan ('flebant', 'gemebant') and are deeply saddened ('contristati

²⁵ VSO, ii.9, pp. 50, 51.

²⁶ Michael Lapidge, 'Byrhtferth and Oswald', in *St Oswald of Worcester*, ed. Nicholas Brooks and Catherine Cubitt (Leicester, 1996), pp. 64–83, p. 79.

²⁷ Lapidge, 'Byrhtferth and Oswald', p. 65.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

²⁹ VSO, iii.3, p. 55, n. 17.

sunt'), Oswald sympathises with their grief ('gemitibus condoluit'). He speaks of the emotional bond shared between himself and the Fleury community, which will not be broken by his physical absence, commenting that he will still be with them 'mentis dilectione' ('in [his] mind's affection'). The affective language here is most familiar from late antique and early medieval epistolary writing, and indeed the elegant, rhetorically-balanced speech which Byrhtferth gives to Oswald here is very close to formal salutations or valedictions found in letters of the period.

'Si enim', inquit ille, 'absens ero uobis corporea uisione, presens ero mentis dilectione, quia pleniter uestram habeo gratiam benedictionis.'

'If, he said, 'I shall be absent from you in bodily appearance, I shall be present among you in my mind's affection, because I am in full possession of the favour of your blessing.'

Whilst the affective language here is characteristic of early medieval letters in general,³⁰ the concept of presence despite absence is an even more specific device of epistolary writing. Caroline White has noted the conventionality of this rhetorical trope in early medieval literature, commenting that the 'paradox of presence despite absence is commonly found throughout late antiquity and the Middle Ages and seems to have appealed particularly to Christians whose doctrines were to a great extent based on paradoxes'.³¹ Similar formulations appear, for example, in the correspondence of Boniface, who writes to Cardinal-Deacon Gemmulus that 'Sepe spiritualiter caritas iungit, quos corporaliter longa intercapidine disiungit' ('it often happens that love unites in spirit those who are widely separated in the body').³² Similarly, in letters to Boniface, Cena (probably an abbess somewhere in Francia) states that 'quia licet te corporalibus oculis raro intuear, quod te tamen spiritalibus cordis luminibus iugiter aspicere non cesso' ('although my bodily eyes see you but seldom, I never cease to look upon you with the eyes of the spirit') and abbess Egburga writes that, 'aspectu corporali visualiter defraudata sim, sororis tamen semper amplexibus collum tuum constrinxero' ('though ... I am deprived of your bodily presence, yet ever I clasp your neck in a sisterly embrace').³³

Whilst Oswald's parting speech to the community at Fleury is strikingly textual in nature, drawing on early medieval epistolary conventions and the tradition of 'presence in absence', the account of his departure also makes use of non-verbal, demonstrative elements to signal the emotional responses of those present. Indeed, only Oswald is given direct speech in this passage, whilst the monks of Fleury weep

³⁰ See for example Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 2006), esp. pp. 135–38 for an overview of late antique and early medieval letter-writing and pp. 113–15 for a discussion of 'sentimentality' in the period, and Raymond Van Dam, *Families and Friends*, p. 131 for a concise summary of epistolary conventions.

³¹ Caroline White, 'Friendship in absence – some patristic views', in *Friendship in Medieval Europe*, ed. Julian Haseldine (Stroud, 1999), pp. 68–90, p. 75.

³² *Die Briefe des Heiligen Bonifatius und Lullus*, ed. Michael Tangl (Berlin, 1955), p. 228. Translation from *The Letters of Saint Boniface*, trans. Ephraim Emerton (New York, 1940), p. 177.

³³ *Die Briefe des Heiligen Bonifatius*, pp. 217 and 19. Translations from *The Letters of Saint Boniface*, pp. 173 and 34.

and wail wordlessly. Lapidge translates 'gemitibus' as 'laments' ('Oswald had sympathy with their laments'), but this too might be better translated as 'groans' – another resolutely non-verbal, performative act. Julia Barrow has identified the *Vita Oswaldi* as one of the relatively few late Anglo-Saxon texts which represent demonstrative behaviour and symbolic acts in ways more typical of continental European practice in the late tenth century. The scene from the *Vita* which she examines in detail is that of Æthelwine's tearful appeal to the monks of Ramsey before requesting the election of Germanus as abbot.³⁴ Significantly, Barrow groups the *Vita Oswaldi* with a small number of other English texts which she describes as having 'continental associations' – in this case through Byrhtferth's interaction with Abbo at Ramsey – and she cautions that 'references to demonstrative behaviour [may] reflect a post-Carolingian continental viewpoint rather than an Anglo-Saxon one'.³⁵ She concludes that 'it thus appears that some of what Anglo-Saxon England did know about demonstrative behaviour it learnt, often through writing, from its links with Flanders, Lotharingia and Northern France', picking out the influence of Abbo at Ramsey as a prime example.³⁶ The scene described here in the *Vita Oswaldi* is complex: the account is written by an Anglo-Saxon author, who has probably absorbed continental influences, imagining a scene in continental Europe in which Oswald may deliberately participate in a continental 'dialect of the metalanguage of gesture'.³⁷ The *Vita* also transforms non-verbal communication into words for the purposes of textual dissemination, intersecting with the traditions of written affective language familiar from epistolary writing. However, the episode shows the close inter-relationship of Anglo-Saxon and continental European ideas and conventions, and the deliberate textual representation of demonstrative behaviour to signal the powerful bond between Oswald and Fleury, which will endure despite physical separation.

Also underpinning this passage is the central metaphor of gift exchange which provides another representational strategy for linking individuals and communities even in the case of physical absence or distance. The messengers sent by Oda ('ueredarios') bring both the archbishop's message and also 'immensis muneribus' ('immense gifts') to the community at Fleury, enacting a show of friendship and also a public display of generosity which ties the monastery, and Oswald, into obligations of reciprocity. There is a symmetry here with Oswald's arrival at Fleury, when he presents gifts which 'immensa erant piisque honoribus digna' ('were immense and well worthy of devout esteem').³⁸ Oswald's parting words to his fellow monks adapt the conventional idiom of 'presence in absence', melding it with the language of the

³⁴ *VSO*, v.14, pp. 182–87.

³⁵ Barrow, 'Demonstrative behaviour', p. 134. For further discussion of the uses of demonstrative behaviour in tenth-century continental Europe, see for example Gerd Althoff, *Spielregeln der Politik, Medieval Concepts of the Past*, ed. Althoff *et al.*, and Janet L. Nelson, *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe* (London, 1986).

³⁶ Barrow, 'Demonstrative behaviour', p. 150.

³⁷ For this phrase, see *ibid.*, p. 148.

³⁸ On his arrival at Fleury, Oswald also passes on greetings from Oda, '[c]elestium minister donorum' ('[t]hat agent of heavenly gifts'). *VSO*, ii.5, pp. 40, 41.

gift and the idea of friendship as a possession. He promises that 'presens ero mentis dilectione, quia pleniter uestram habeo gratiam benedictionis' ('I shall be present among you in my mind's affection, because I am in full possession of the favour of your blessing'). Thus the chapter begins with a conventional instance of material gift exchange, then constructs the transaction of friendship between Oswald and Fleury in parallel metaphorical terms. Oswald carries the blessing of the monks of Fleury with him like a gift, suggesting the continuing economies of friendship which will bond them together across physical distance.

Although Oswald is ostensibly the pupil at Ramsey, learning more about reformed regular monasticism, he is also already presented as a figure of spiritual patronage here. As discussed, the *Vita* refers ahead to his future role as teacher and patron, leaving the reader in no doubt that Oswald is the ultimate spiritual patron and authority celebrated throughout the text. Leaving Fleury, Oswald already assumes a superior spiritual role, sympathising with the sadness of the monks and interceding with God on their behalf for consolation ('quibus Domini consolationis auxilium').³⁹ In this chapter, the *Vita Oswaldi* deploys a number of textual strategies to reinforce the continuing vitality and efficacy of the bond between Oswald and Fleury, even once the saint has returned to England. Clearly, it is advantageous to Byrhtferth, writing at Ramsey Abbey, to celebrate the enduring association with Fleury initiated by Oswald and continued so prominently at his own monastery, emphasising that spatial separation is no impediment to spiritual friendship and continued allegiance. Yet the strong message regarding the power and efficacy of the absent patron presented in this short, clearly-focused chapter of the *Vita* has relevance beyond the immediate case of Oswald's relationship with Fleury. The problems of absent patronage would have been acute in the personal experience of Byrhtferth at Ramsey in the late tenth century. Oswald, the abbey's founder and titular abbot, lived far away from East Anglia at either Worcester or York, and the monks operated under the immediate government of Eadnoth, their prior.⁴⁰ Thus, monastic life at Ramsey was shaped by the ever-present absence of its ultimate spiritual patron. Later, after the 'anti-monastic reaction' of 975, the Benedictine monks expelled from the Mercian house of Winchcombe were re-housed at Ramsey, presumably on the orders of Oswald. Germanus, abbot of Winchcombe, himself spent the first three years after the expulsion at Fleury, before being recalled to join his monks in Ramsey by Oswald in 978.⁴¹ Quite apart from the 'tensions' arising from two monastic communities (under their two separate governors, Eadnoth and Germanus) being housed in one abbey,⁴² Germanus's three-year period in Fleury would have again foregrounded problematic issues of absence and separation for the Winchcombe monks left at Ramsey. The *Vita Sancti Oswaldi*, written within the first decade after Oswald's death, fulfils a conventional function of hagiography, inventing an enduring textual presence for the saint and spiritual patron in response to his absence from mortal life.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, iii.3, pp. 56, 57.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. xxi. Eadnoth became the abbot of Ramsey on Oswald's death in 992.

⁴¹ See *ibid.*, p. xxi.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. xxi.

But the model of 'presence in absence' and effective patronage despite bodily separation presented by Byrhtferth in the *Vita* has practical and political as well as spiritual uses. It asserts an ideology of the power and authority of the absent patron: involved, effective and available despite being physically distant and removed.

In the two earliest Lives of St Dunstan there are very different reasons for the absence of the text's central figure and spiritual patron: political conflict and enforced exile. The first *Vita*, by the author known as 'B' and written between 995 and 1005,⁴³ suggests that Dunstan narrowly escaped being exiled by King Edmund (940–46), who was turned against the saint by jealous courtiers. According to B, Edmund

...jussit eum ablata dignitate etiam omni honore privari, et sibi senioratum ubi vellet sine se suisque conquirere. Erant autem apud Ceodrum ubi hæc facta fuerant viri venerabiles, regni videlicet orientis nuncii, cum rege tunc hospitantes, quos ille quasi jam exilio deputatus, aliud sibi ignorans consilium, aggressus est id orans ne se relictum a rege ipsi desererent, sed secum ad patriam quamvis ad incolatum perducerent. At illi mœstitiæ ipsius compatientes sponponderunt ei quæque regni sui commode si secum comitaturus adiret.⁴⁴

...ordered him to be stripped of every office and also deprived of every honour, and to procure for himself patronage where he chose, away from him and his followers. There were at Cheddar, where these things took place, some venerable men, namely messengers of the eastern kingdom, staying at that time with the king. Dunstan, as if already destined to exile, knowing no other course for himself, approached these, praying that they would not desert him, abandoned as he was by the king, but would take him with them into any country to dwell there. They took pity on his unhappiness and promised him all the advantages of their kingdom if he went there in their company.⁴⁵

Whitelock interprets the 'eastern kingdom' ('regni ... orientis') as 'the eastern part of the Frankish empire' (rather than a kingdom or region within Britain itself), a reading supported by Dunstan's profession here that he is ready to be taken 'into any country' ('ad patriam quamvis'). Yet, famously, Dunstan avoids this threatened exile after Edmund's moment of revelation when hunting a stag at Cheddar Gorge, and is appointed abbot of Glastonbury. Perhaps even better known is the story of Dunstan's later intervention at the coronation feast of Eadwig, when he interrupts the new king in a compromising position with the noblewoman Ælfgifu and her mother, the royal crown cast to the floor.⁴⁶ Dunstan's subsequent self-imposed exile in Flanders (956–57) is necessitated by the enmity between himself and Eadwig, and also Ælfgifu, whom the king later marries. Whilst this exile removes Dunstan from the monastery of Glastonbury and the wider ecclesiastical community in England, the text by B deploys a number of rhetorical strategies to affirm his continued spiritual fellowship with his English brothers, despite his physical absence.

⁴³ See Michael Lapidge, 'B. and the Vita S. Dunstani' in his *Anglo-Latin Literature 900–1066* (London, 1993), pp. 279–92, p. 279.

⁴⁴ VSD B, Chapter 13, p. 23.

⁴⁵ Dorothy Whitelock, ed., *English Historical Documents Vol. 1, c.500–1042* (London, 1955), p. 899.

⁴⁶ VSD B, Chapter 21, pp. 32–33.

B devotes just one full chapter of the *Vita* (Chapter 23) to an account of Dunstan's experience in Flanders, with Nicholas Brooks commenting that 'B. seems to have known nothing of the circumstances of Dunstan's foreign exile'.⁴⁷ Certainly, the details here are vague, telling only that Dunstan travelled 'ad ... regionem dictu Galliaē' ('to the region called Gaul') and that there he found 'quodam terræ illius principe' ('a certain prince of that land'), who 'eum paterno caritatis affectu sub exilii sui tempore custodivit' ('protected him with paternal love and affection during his period of exile').⁴⁸ There is no specific mention of Count Arnulf I of Flanders who received and supported Dunstan, or of the monastery of St Peter's, Ghent (also known as Blandinium or Mont Blandin), where Dunstan joined the community. Whilst the opportunity to join a reformed Benedictine monastery and learn more about the regular life was undoubtedly an attraction for the saint, Steven Vanderputten has recently reminded us that Dunstan's association with Arnulf may also have had a political dimension.⁴⁹ The omission of such specific detail and historical context in a hagiography is of course unsurprising. The emphasis of B is not on the practical details of Dunstan's stay in Flanders (of which he may well have been ignorant), but rather on the use of textual conventions which assert the continuity of his relationship with the monks of Glastonbury and his continuing participation in spiritual fellowship and community. Drawing on established rhetorical conventions and scriptural allusion, B builds a concise, sparing, but emphatic picture of Dunstan's continued association with Glastonbury and England.

The passage includes a variation on the 'presence in absence' convention already seen in the *Vita Oswaldi* and familiar from medieval epistolary writing. B remarks that, while Dunstan 'remotus fuerat' ('had been far removed') from his home community in England, 'tamen mente manebat in patria' ('yet he remained, in his thoughts, in his homeland').⁵⁰ The passage characterises Dunstan as an adoptive son of Ghent, 'foveretur' ('fostered') and subject to the quasi-paternal care of Arnulf ('paterno caritatis affectu'), yet he remains tied mentally and spiritually to his 'fatherland' of England. B also makes use of the conventions of demonstrative behaviour, telling that Dunstan 'saepe habundantem lacrymarum imbrem ex oculorum fluentis ingemiscendo deduxit' ('was often reduced to sighing by the stream of abundant tears flowing from his eyes') when 'in exilio meminit quantam religionis celsitudinem in monasterio dereliquit' ('in exile he remembered what heights of religious observance he had left behind in the monastery'). A conventional marker of authentic emotion and privileged spiritual experience in late antique and early medieval texts, this weeping affirms Dunstan's affection for his fellow monks in England, and dismisses any suspicion that his retreat to Flanders may have

⁴⁷ Nicholas Brooks, 'The Career of St Dunstan', in his *Anglo-Saxon Myths: State and Church, 400–1066* (London, 2000), pp. 155–80, p. 172.

⁴⁸ VSD B, Chapter 23, p. 34.

⁴⁹ Vanderputten comments that '[s]ince relations between the English court and the count of Flanders had been strained for some time, Arnulf eagerly accepted the dissident abbot in his county and arranged for him to stay at Saint-Peter'. See Vanderputten, 'Canterbury and Flanders', p. 220.

⁵⁰ VSD B, Chapter 23, p. 34.

represented a rejection or betrayal of his English brothers.⁵¹ Whilst modern scholars have been keen to emphasise what Dunstan may have learned from his experience of reformed monasticism at Ghent, here B places more emphasis on the 'religionis celsitudinem' ('heights of religious observance') which Dunstan has left behind in Glastonbury, suggesting that his primary aim is to celebrate English religious life rather than to commend the merits of St Peter's as a centre of reformed monasticism.⁵² This is probably to be expected, considering the dedication of the *Vita* to Archbishop Ælfric of Canterbury and B's identity as a secular cleric rather than a Benedictine monk,⁵³ and contrasts with the greater emphasis placed by Adelard in the later *Vita* on Ghent as a model of the regular monastic life.⁵⁴ In the account of Dunstan's exile by B, Glastonbury and England remain very much present in the saint's emotional and mental experience, and he participates in this continuing spiritual community through the active work of memory and affect. The divine vision sent to reassure Dunstan that his enemies will not triumph, echoing the words of Job 6:25, is a further sign that, though physically removed, the saint is still part of a wider spiritual community joined together by God.⁵⁵ In this short chapter, B's emphasis is continually on Dunstan's continuing spiritual patronage of Glastonbury and the wider monastic community in England, despite his physical absence.

The next *Vita Sancti Dunstani*, addressed to Archbishop Ælfege of Canterbury (1006–12), offers slightly more concrete detail on Dunstan's exile in Flanders, probably due to the fact that its author, Adelard, was himself a monk of Blandinium. Adelard tells us that Dunstan stays at a 'coenobium nomine Blandinium, a sancto quondam Amando structum, in majori elegantia renovavit' ('a monastery called Blandinium, built by a certain saint Amand, and in the greater part splendidly restored'), thus reminding the reader of the claim of St Peter's to be an early centre of reformed, restored regular monasticism and an influence on the Benedictine reform in England.⁵⁶ Adelard also names Arnulf as Dunstan's protector in Ghent, making clear and explicit the specific links – and debts – formed between England and

⁵¹ For the trope of tears in this period, see Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, pp. 44–45. One of the seminal images in this medieval tradition is of Augustine of Hippo's tears of repentance in the Milan villa garden. Augustine, *Confessions*, ed. and trans. W. Watts, 2 vols (Cambridge, Mass., 1912), vol. 1, pp. 462, 463.

⁵² For discussions of the importance of Flanders and Flemish influence on the English Benedictine Reform, see for example T. Symons, 'The *Regularis Concordia*: History and Derivation', in *Tenth-Century Studies. Essays in Commemoration of the Millennium of the Council of Winchester and Regularis Concordia*, ed. David Parsons (London, 1975), pp. 37–59. Whilst Glastonbury in the time of Dunstan's abbacy probably housed many secular clerics (including B himself) as well as regular monks (see Brooks, 'The Career of St Dunstan', p. 168), B presents it as a model coenobitic community.

⁵³ See Lapidge, 'B. and the Vita S. Dunstani', p. 291.

⁵⁴ See *ibid.*, p. 279.

⁵⁵ Catherine Cubitt has discussed the prominence of visions across the two earliest *Lives* of St Dunstan. See Catherine Cubitt, 'Archbishop Dunstan: A Prophet in Politics?' in *Myth, Rulership, Church and Charters: Essays in Honour of Nicholas Brooks*, ed. Julia Barrow et al. (Aldershot, 2008), pp. 145–66.

⁵⁶ Adelard, *VSD*, Lectio VI, p. 59.

Flanders.⁵⁷ Whilst St Peter's is carefully promoted as a centre of spiritual revival and learning, Dunstan himself is presented as a model of the holy life, who 'exempla lucis imitanda reliquit' ('set an example of light to be imitated'). This image of Dunstan as a shining beacon of virtue and piety suggests his influence both within Blandinium and beyond, the brightness of his example transcending physical distance and reaching out across space. Adelard also gives an account of a vision which appears to Dunstan, again underlining his participation in a vital, active spiritual community which is not sundered or impeded by physical separation. Dunstan is visited by the apostle Andrew, who brings the saint consolation and comfort.⁵⁸ In a direct second-person address (a liturgical formulation closing the *Lectio*), Adelard reflects upon how, through this spiritual visitation, Christ 'famulus Tuus amplexus' ('embraced Your servant'). This embrace – a very physical metaphor for incorporation into the Christian body, with all its associations of affective, demonstrative behaviour – once again underlines the full participation of Dunstan in a wider spiritual fellowship which transcends physical place and distance. In the accounts of both B and Adelard, the angelic or saintly messengers bringing visions and consolation represent intermediaries between members of a spiritual community which is not compromised by physical absence or removal.⁵⁹

The circumstances surrounding the production of each of the two earliest Lives of St Dunstan call attention, in different ways, to issues of absent patronage as well as the continuation of cultural connections and exchanges between England and the continent. The identity of 'B', author of the first *Vita*, remains the subject of some controversy. Stubbs devotes a large section of his Introduction to the *Memorials of Saint Dunstan* to a discussion of the possible identity of B (pp. xi–xxvi), concluding that he was most likely a continental Saxon. Michael Lapidge's re-appraisal of the evidence reaches the deduction that the author was in fact 'a native Englishman who since 960 had been living outside England'. Having considered all the available evidence, Lapidge presents a remarkably detailed account of the presumed career of this author. He suggests that B was born in the West Country and was probably trained at Glastonbury (though was not necessarily a monk), eventually receiving an appointment as a member of Dunstan's own personal retinue. He continued in this role until 960, when he left Dunstan's circle 'and went to Liège to pursue his own interests and scholarly career, drawn by the prestige which Liège enjoyed as a centre

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Lectio VI, p. 59–60.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, Lectio VI, p. 60. Catherine Cubitt has remarked on the special prominence given to Andrew in the *Lives* by B and, especially, Adelard. Cubitt, 'Archbishop Dunstan', pp. 152–53.

⁵⁹ This assertion of spiritual fellowship across distance is not unusual in hagiography of the period. For example, a similar formulation occurs in the *Vita Gauzlini*, where the text describes the relationship between Abbot Oliba of Ripoll (Catalonia) and Gauzlin. '[Q]uæ spiritalis eorum familiaritas in tantum exuberaverat ut quos longa terrarum sequestrabant interstitial, divine amoris conjungeret presentia' ('[t]heir spiritual friendship increased to the extent that, despite the long earthly distances which separated them, the presence of divine love joined them together'. *Vie de Gauzlin, abbé de Fleury: Vita Gauzlini abbatis Floriacensis monasterii* ed. R.H. Bautier et al. (Paris, 1969), Chapter 54, p. 94.

of learning'. There he was probably a canon of St Martin's College, founded by Bishop Ebrachar in 963.⁶⁰

After Ebrachar's death in 971, B. became dissatisfied with life at Liège; he sought patronage from Dunstan, his former employer, and from Æthelgar, a former colleague, but in both cases he was unsuccessful, and remained (presumably) in Liège for some thirty years. While there he ultimately learned of Dunstan's death, and made a final plea for patronage by composing his *Vita S. Dunstani* and sending it to Archbishop Ælfric. In this bid, too, he was unsuccessful, and we may imagine that he died at Liège, a disgruntled old man, perhaps c. 1000.⁶¹

The *Vita Dunstani* by B clearly had a life beyond the author's original intentions and directly-addressed audience. We know, for example, that Abbo of Fleury was carrying a copy of the text, for versification, when he was murdered in 1004 at the monastery of La Reole, Gascony,⁶² and Stubbs gives a full account of the manuscript history and later dissemination of the *Vita*.⁶³ But, if Michael Lapidge's conclusions are correct,⁶⁴ then the first *Vita Dunstani* itself represents an appeal to the idea of absent patronage and fellowship despite physical distance and removal.⁶⁵

As Lapidge notes, B introduces himself in the dedication to Ælfric as 'omnium extimus sacerdotum B. vilisque Saxonum indigena' ('the most foreign of all priests and a worthless native of the Saxon race'),⁶⁶ using *extimus*, 'the (archaic) superlative of *exter* ("on the outside", "in another country")' to describe his position.⁶⁷ This deliberate, emphatic formulation stresses B's physical removal and distance from England and the English circles within which he may once have moved. B thus opens the entire *Vita* with an image of himself as alienated, remote, estranged. Yet the text itself seeks to demonstrate that, despite his physical removal, he is still a member of the spiritual community gathered and shaped by St Dunstan and still participates in English ecclesiastical culture. By choosing to memorialise Dunstan in the *Vita*, B asserts his continuing allegiance and fellowship with England, bolstering his claim for the patronage and support of Archbishop Ælfric of Canterbury. The account of Dunstan's exile in Flanders in the *Vita Dunstani* according to B becomes therefore a significant statement about the viability of remote patronage and of spiritual and

⁶⁰ Lapidge, 'B. and the Vita S. Dunstani', p. 291.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² See for example Patrick Wormald, 'Æthelwold and his Continental Counterparts: Contact, Comparison, Contrast', in *Bishop Æthelwold: His Career and Influence*, ed. Barbara Yorke (Woodbridge, 1988), pp. 13–42, p. 23 and Michel Sot, 'Pratique et Usages de l'histoire chez Abbon de Fleury', in *Abbon, un Abbé de l'An Mil*, ed. Annie Dufour and Gillette Labory (Turnhout, 2008), pp. 205–23, p. 207.

⁶³ *Memorials of St Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. William Stubbs, Rolls Series 63 (London, 1874), pp. xxvi–xxx.

⁶⁴ There is not universal consensus on this: James Campbell, for example, remains more convinced that B was 'probably' a continental Saxon in England. See James Campbell, 'Observations on English Government', p. 196.

⁶⁵ See also Cubitt, 'Archbishop Dunstan', p. 148.

⁶⁶ VSD B, Prologue, p. 3, translation from Lapidge, 'B. and the Vita S. Dunstani', p. 279.

⁶⁷ Lapidge, 'B. and the Vita S. Dunstani', p. 283.

affective engagement despite physical absence. The weeping Dunstan, still present in England in his mind and deeply regretting his unwanted exile from the 'heights' of English religion, provides a model for B, living at Liège but seeking the restoration of his English patronage and perhaps a return to England. But Dunstan also, perhaps more importantly, presents an exemplar of the involved, active spiritual patron, still participating in a wider religious community despite his absence. In this way, Dunstan perhaps provides a template for Archbishop Ælfric, who can similarly show his patronage of B – in both spiritual and, we might assume, material ways – despite his physical distance. B's representation of Dunstan's exile, then, is not a disinterested account of an episode in the saint's life, but rather a statement about absence and patronage which relates directly to his own personal situation and his political agendas in writing the text.

Adelard's *Vita*, addressed to Ælfege of Canterbury, can also be understood as a contribution to ongoing economies of patronage, allegiance and obligation between England and Flanders in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. The text commemorates the beneficial exchanges begun with Dunstan's stay in Ghent, its specific named references to Arnulf and Blandinium providing a pragmatic reminder of particular debts and obligations. The *Vita* itself, perhaps written in response to a request by Ælfege for a versification of B's text, represents another moment within this continuing cycle of exchange and reciprocity and a deliberate attempt to remind Canterbury of its ties and obligations on the continent.⁶⁸ The recent new edition by Steven Vanderputten of a series of letters from monastic communities in Flanders to Canterbury in this period provides evidence of this broader context of patronage and cultural exchange, showing how benefactions initiated by Dunstan himself became part of a wider 'chain of sustained patronage' in the following decades.⁶⁹ These texts provide an informative background to Adelard's *Vita*, showing how, in the years immediately preceding, abbots from monasteries in Flanders worked hard to reinforce and extend connections with Canterbury, seeking in successive archbishops a 'perseverantem patronum' ('enduring patron').⁷⁰ Dunstan himself features prominently in these letters as the instigator and ultimate spiritual patron of the close fellowship between Flanders and Canterbury, described in one instance as 'praeifulgens luce sanctitatis' ('shining with the light of sanctity') across physical space and beyond his own mortal life.⁷¹ Like these letters, Adelard's *Vita Dunstani* seeks to assert and demonstrate the viability and vitality of spiritual communities even in the case of physical separation or distance. His account of Dunstan's stay at Ghent presents a model of effective patronage and spiritual fellowship despite absence,

⁶⁸ See Stubbs, *Memorials of St Dunstan*, pp. xxx–i.

⁶⁹ Vanderputten, 'Canterbury and Flanders', esp. p. 225.

⁷⁰ This particular quotation comes from a letter from Odbert, abbot of Saint-Bertin, to Æthelgar, archbishop of Canterbury (c. 989–90). *Ibid.*, pp. 240–42, p. 241. Vanderputten describes this particular formula as an attempt 'to establish privileged relations', using 'expressions that go far beyond what is institutionally realistic' (p. 231).

⁷¹ This comes from a letter from Falrad, abbot of Saint-Vaast, to Æthelgar, archbishop of Canterbury (988–90). *Ibid.*, pp. 238–40.

underpinning the claims of Flanders monks in the period to continuing support and benefaction from Canterbury.

Both of the two earliest Lives of St Dunstan (as well as Byrhtferth's *Vita Oswaldi*) suggest the particular kinds of strategies employed in hagiographic texts to represent the power and efficacy of patronage despite physical distance and removal, including the use of highly affective language (often intersecting with traditions of epistolary writing), the depiction of transcendent spiritual activities and experiences such as prayer and vision, and the representation of highly-coded, ritualised gestures and behaviour which enact and affirm the enduring connections between individuals. As a historicised reading shows, the careful representations of absent patronage in these texts can also be related to the circumstances of their own production and concerns with seeking, maintaining or renewing links with distant patrons. The earliest Lives of Dunstan and the *Vita Oswaldi* also exemplify the dynamic exchanges and cross-currents between England and the continent in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. Texts such as these have received sustained attention from historians over the last decades, as possible sources of evidence for the realities of interaction between England and the continent in the period, and, as David Rollason puts it, for what they can tell us 'in terms of the attitudes and outlook (*mentalités*, as our French colleagues would call them) found in both areas'.⁷² A pivotal figure in these exchanges of learning, texts and attitudes between England and north-western Europe is Abbo of Fleury, whose stay at Ramsey in 986 to 987 had a lasting impact on the monastic school there and on the future careers of scholars such as Byrhtferth. Abbo's work reflects the assimilation of continental and English ideological and representational systems, perhaps most clearly evident in his texts which celebrate patrons and deal with issues of absent or remote patronage. Many of his works – most particularly the verse panegyrics – respond to specific political pressures and opportunities, both in continental Europe and in England, drawing on a wide range of literary and rhetorical conventions, as well as his scientific learning, in order to celebrate influential figures and cement expedient relationships. Abbo's own close connections with Dunstan are well known, evidenced in the *Passio Sancti Eadmundi* which he dedicated to him and several extant letters.⁷³

Abbo's epistolary acrostic poems to Dunstan, recorded by Byrhtferth in the *Vita Sancti Oswaldi*, demonstrate the textual strategies which he deploys to celebrate patronage and the figure of the patron and to deal with the potential challenges of physical absence or separation. These texts are best understood alongside another verse panegyric by Abbo: his acrostic to Otto III, which circulated in Chapter 13 of Aimoin's *Vita Abbonis*. Marco Mostert has written of the difficulty in recovering Abbo's political thought, commenting that he 'never wrote down his political theology in any one, single text' and that it can only be speculatively, and partially, reconstructed through careful close analysis of his extant works.⁷⁴ The verse

⁷² David Rollason, 'The Concept of Sanctity in the Early Lives of St Dunstan', in *St Dunstan: His Life, Times and Cult*, ed. Nigel Ramsey et al. (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 261–72, p. 261.

⁷³ See Marco Mostert, *The Political Theology of Abbo of Fleury* (Hilversum, 1987), pp. 40–41.

⁷⁴ Mostert, *The Political Theology of Abbo of Fleury*, p. 18.

panegyrics to Dunstan and Otto offer valuable insights into Abbo's political ideology and, most especially, an opportunity to investigate the rhetorical techniques which he uses to articulate and promote these ideas. In these poems the central patron figure is represented as powerful and authoritative even while absent, with a range of sophisticated metaphorical systems and meta-textual devices employed to rehearse and reinforce this central theme. Of course, these poems deal with diverse subjects, different constructions of patronage and varying political contexts. But, across the texts, certain central political concerns and associated rhetorical responses become apparent, with imagery of light, beholding and reflection recurring as an important element of Abbo's symbolic panegyric vocabulary. This imagery obviously resonates with Abbo's celebrated learning in science and astronomy, well known in his own period and investigated in detail by modern scholars.⁷⁵ Yet, as 'a man of profound learning',⁷⁶ Abbo's experience and expertise extended far beyond the disciplines of grammar and computistics. These poems also draw on representational and rhetorical traditions associated with late antique and early medieval political panegyric and ceremonial, bringing together a range of conventions from secular and sacred contexts to celebrate and legitimise the (absent) patron.

Although it is the latest of these texts in date, the epistolary poem to Otto III provides a valuable starting-point as it calls attention to key issues of patronage, authority and absence which were of acute concern to Abbo throughout his career on the continent and which undoubtedly shaped his ideas and literary representations of absent patrons across his literary work. Within the broader cultural and political context of Ottonian and Salian itinerant kingship, Fleury-sur-Loire was a royal monastery, dependent on the king for benefaction, grants of immunity from the local nobility, and protection.⁷⁷ John Bernhardt comments that:

During the tenth and eleventh centuries in Germany, the Ottonian and Salian monarchs drew much of their political and economic support from the royal churches of their realm. In fact, during the Ottonian period royal churches increasingly became the most important economic bases for the accommodation of the royal presence in the realm, as well as the venues for the liturgical representation of sacral kingship.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ See for example the discussion of Abbo's *Computus* and associated writings in Michael Lapidge and Peter S. Baker, 'More Acrostic Verse by Abbo of Fleury', *Journal of Medieval Latin* 7 (1997), 1–27, or analysis of his influence at Ramsey in Cyril Hart, 'The Ramsey *Computus*', *English Historical Review* 85 (1970), 29–44.

⁷⁶ Scott Gwara, 'Three Acrostic Poems by Abbo of Fleury', *Journal of Medieval Latin* 2 (1992), 203–31, p. 204.

⁷⁷ See for example Rollason, 'The Concept of Sanctity', p. 262 and Reuter, 'The "imperial church system"', pp. 347–54. Both of these scholars caution that these inter-relationships between monarch and specific monasteries, bishops or abbots should not be understood as an organised, consistent 'system', but rather as a series of individual, local cases of patronage, benefaction and mutual obligation. For a discussion of the influence of the Fleury model on England, see Nightingale, 'Oswald, Fleury and continental reform', pp. 23–45, pp. 42–44.

⁷⁸ Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship*, p. 290.

Whilst the reformed royal monasteries generally enjoyed these close ties with the monarch, Abbo's abbacy at Fleury is marked by a particular involvement in court affairs and issues of royal government.⁷⁹ Yet, during the inevitable extended periods of royal absence, due to the monarch's *iter* through the kingdom, a royal monastery such as Fleury was vulnerable to hostility from local land-owners and threats from the nobility. Of course, the issue of absent kingship was not only of relevance to royal monasteries, but would have had an impact throughout the territories claimed by a monarch, where 'real problems arose' without his direct physical presence.⁸⁰ Clearly, for any parties with an interest in or dependence on the monarch, there was an acute need for representational strategies to assert and authorise the power and influence of the monarch, even when absent. Timothy Reuter has discussed how these royal 'means of representation when absent are inevitably symbolic in nature', showing how features within the landscape such as palaces, elevated buildings, and royal churches 'made up a representative landscape ... in which the ruler was symbolically omnipresent'.⁸¹ These royal sites, which 'we must envisage as symbolically inhabited by the king even in his absence', represent a material demonstration of continuing royal power even whilst the king was occupied in other parts of the kingdom.⁸² Abbo's epistolary poem to Otto III shows how literary texts could also provide a range of symbolic possibilities for legitimising the far-reaching power of the ruler, even when physically absent.⁸³ The complex strategies employed by Abbo in this poem indicate the highly-sophisticated and developed role which textual culture could play in the promotion of Ottonian kingship. As Julia Barrow has observed, whilst the accepted view is that 'functional literacy' played less of a role in Ottonian (as opposed to late Anglo-Saxon) government, a text such as Abbo's poem to Otto shows that Germany was equally – and perhaps more – capable of the production and exploitation of literate 'high culture' to shape and maintain political ideologies.⁸⁴

Abbo's poem to Otto III was written in 997 in the context of the Crescentian uprising in Rome and Otto's prolonged absence in the eastern borders of the kingdom. The city of Rome, and the cultural inheritance which it signified, seems to have been of particular importance for Otto, who held aspirations of Roman *renovatio* and the ambition to be proclaimed Holy Roman Emperor.⁸⁵ Whilst Otto campaigned in the east, the Roman senator and *patricius* Crescentius displaced Pope

⁷⁹ Mostert, *The Political Theology of Abbo of Fleury*, p. 45.

⁸⁰ Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship*, p. 53.

⁸¹ Timothy Reuter, 'Regemque, quem in Francia pene perdidit, in patria magnifice recepit. Ottonian ruler representation in synchronic and diachronic comparison', in *Medieval Politics and Modern Mentalities*, pp. 127–46, p. 141.

⁸² Reuter, 'Regemque, quem in Francia pene perdidit', p. 141.

⁸³ The special role of texts here can be understood as part of the wider power of writing to 'grant the possibilities of speaking with the distant and the dead'. See Seth Lerer, *Literacy and Power in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1991), p. 86.

⁸⁴ Barrow, 'Demonstrative behaviour', p. 145.

⁸⁵ See Gwara, 'Three Acrostic Poems', p. 213. Gerd Althoff queries whether Otto had a conscious ideology of Roman renewal at this point, suggesting that while Rome was important to the young king he did not yet have a fully formed 'policy' of Roman renewal or imperial ambition. See Althoff, *Otto III*, trans. Phyllis G. Jestice (Philadelphia, 2003), pp. 81–89.

Gregory V (Bruno, son of Duke Otto of Thuringia, and Otto's cousin), and drove him into exile in Spoleto.⁸⁶ Otto's continued absence and lack of intervention in this situation prompted the poem by Abbo, which recalls him to Rome. The reasons for Otto's slow response to the Crescentian crisis remain the subject of scholarly debate: whilst some historians have emphasised his imperial ambitions and interest in Rome even at this date, Gerd Althoff has suggested that these concerns did not yet figure prominently in his plans and aspirations.

Time and again historians have suggested that Otto was kept from this expedition [to Rome] by even more urgent tasks – first by warfare against the Slavs, then by the uncertain political situation in Hungary. However, the sources are not clear about whether the emperor regarded intervention in Rome as a particularly urgent matter.⁸⁷

It is possible, then, that as well as calling Otto back to Rome to deal with a specific political crisis, Abbo's highly-classicising poem also plays a seminal role in shaping and developing the imperial ambitions and ideology of *renovatio* which were later to become such a key feature of Otto's reign.⁸⁸ Abbo composed the epistolary poem to Otto whilst staying with Gregory V in Spoleto.⁸⁹ According to Schramm, '[d]er Zweck dieser Verse war, den Kaiser zum Romzug anzuspornen und ihn unter Berufung auf seiner Vorfahren und die Größe seiner Stellung von Grenzkrieg im Osten abzuziehen' ('the purpose of this poem was to encourage the Emperor to return to Rome and, through an appeal to his ancestors and the greatness of his position, to pull him back from the war at the eastern border').⁹⁰ Otto did return to Rome in 998, though we cannot know whether this was the result of Abbo's poem, where he killed Crescentius and imprisoned the illegitimate pope. Abbo's involvement in the affair, through his composition of the acrostic poem to Otto, seems to have helped to secure long-term support and patronage from both Otto and Gregory V for his monastery at Fleury.⁹¹ The poem reflects Abbo's political role and the complex rhetorical strategies he could employ to persuade and influence those in power. It also demonstrates his abilities as a diplomat and tactician, able to negotiate a potentially delicate and dangerous exchange with the emperor.

The poem's central request forms the basis of the acrostic, evident in the reconstructed text supplied by Gwara in his edition: 'Otto ualens caesar, nostro tu

⁸⁶ See Gwara, 'Three Acrostic Poems', p. 213.

⁸⁷ Althoff, *Otto III*, p. 72.

⁸⁸ Gwara describes the poem as 'less a plea for help than an affirmation of Roman, Carolingian and Ottonian hegemony' and a celebration of the idea of Roman *renovatio*, though, unlike Althoff, Gwara regards this as an already-developed ideology held by the young Otto at this time. See Gwara, 'Three Acrostic Poems', p. 214.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 213; Percy Ernst Schramm, 'Die Briefe Kaiser Ottos III. und Gerberts von Reims aus dem Jahre 997', *Archiv für Urkundenforschung* 9 (1926), 87–122, p. 113.

⁹⁰ Schramm, 'Die Briefe Kaiser Ottos', p. 114.

⁹¹ Gwara, 'Three Acrostic Poems', p. 214.

cede coturno!’ (‘Powerful Emperor Otto, yield to our plaintive song!’).⁹² The poem skilfully balances this plea (in fact, an imperative) with panegyric and flattery, carefully negotiating the obvious potential difficulties of offering political instruction to the emperor. The author and addressee of the poem are encoded in the *versus intextus*, ‘Otto case[ar] Abbo abba’ (‘(To) Emperor Otto (from) father Abbo’),⁹³ alluding to the convention of the acrostic as a literary gift, and gently (perhaps even somewhat playfully, given the pun here) legitimising Abbo’s role as advice-giver as a benevolent ‘father’ in terms of both ecclesiastical position and his senior age. Thus the text sets up a series of economies between the poem’s author and its recipient. Abbo offers panegyric and celebration, which in turn must be matched with Otto’s continued worthiness. Good advice must be repaid with right action. The elaborate acrostic flatters Otto’s intellectual abilities (or aspirations), but demands he prove his skills as a reader with an appropriate response. The text presents Otto’s role as that of an active reader, participating in the interpretation of the poem and collaborating with Abbo so that author and addressee together realise its meaning and intended effect.

Dum uates bonus opto dari, mirabilis, istud
Expandes opus ipse meum...

While I, a good poet, was hoping that it be granted (that) you yourself, being
admirable, would interpret this work of mine...⁹⁴

Whilst the main acrostic framework of the poem presents the direct appeal to Otto, the crux of the political problem being negotiated here is found in line 19 of the poem, or in the very centre of the acrostic, just after the horizontal re-statement of ‘Otto ualens Caesar...’. Abbo writes that ‘Solus ... regnans absens’ (‘you alone reign though absent’), alluding to Otto’s campaign in the far east of the kingdom and his distance from Rome. The deliberate ambivalence and ambiguity of this phrase, however, exemplifies the poem’s careful balance of panegyric and critique, celebration and caution. The crucial term ‘solus’ provides the key to interpretation here: either it is Otto alone who has the power and authority to rule even whilst not physically present, or alternatively he alone attempts to rule in absence, resulting in political disorder and conflict. In fact, the poem as a whole shows that Abbo balances and simultaneously sustains both of these possible readings, suggesting Otto’s neglect of his duties as king and his abandonment of Rome, while at the same time promoting an ideology of viable rule and power in absence.

As been discussed by previous readers of the poem, Abbo’s acrostic to Otto both celebrates and admonishes the young emperor by measuring him against the great examples of his ancestors, Otto the Great (d. 973) and Otto II (d. 983). In his recent article on Abbo’s uses of history, Michel Sot wonders whether we should consider

⁹² Gwara, ‘Three Acrostic Poems’, pp. 228, 229. This text forms line numbers 1, 19 and 35 in Gwara’s critical edition (the source of all further references to the poem and the two acrostics to Dunstan), as well as the framework of the acrostic in his reconstructed text (p. 227).

⁹³ Gwara, ‘Three Acrostic Poems’, p. 227.

⁹⁴ Lines 27–28.

this poem as a work of history ('peut-il être considéré comme œuvre d'histoire?'), commenting on the poem's dominant interest in the past and the deeds of Otto's father and grandfather.⁹⁵ Yet clearly these allusions to Otto's ancestors all have a direct present relevance, showing the model of kingship which he should emulate and equal. Throughout the celebration of Otto and his ancestors, imagery of light, shining and brilliance provides the central metaphorical scheme, with the sense of radiance and reflection extending into the textual structure of the acrostic itself. Abbo writes that Otto III is '[t]ot felix atavis, quot cēlo sydera lucent' ('fortunate in as many ancestors as stars shine in the sky', line 2). Otto himself is 'Lumen ubique micans, solus lucendo uelud sol' ('a beacon shining everywhere, alone in your brilliance like the sun', line 7), the term 'solus' again foregrounding Otto's unique claim as emperor and his ultimate power and authority. Subtly extending this metaphor of Otto as the sun, Abbo writes:

Nec deerit uirtus, omnis qua gratia culmen
Scandit et occultis secedit nenia causis.

Your power, by which all grace mounts to the heavens and sorrow departs
through hidden causes, will not fail (lines 9–10).

Abbo's continuation of the emperor-as-sun metaphor here is confirmed by his use of the verb *scando*, which appears in his computistical work and other verse to refer to the motion of the sun through the sky.⁹⁶ The poem closes with an image of Otto's ancestors smiling upon him ('risit'), whilst 'preclarus' ('outstanding', also 'most radiant') in their ceremonial dress. These pervasive, extended metaphors of light and shining represent the glory, worth and fame of Otto and his illustrious forebears. But, more specifically, they also form a symbolic vocabulary of the king's far-reaching power and authority (to use Reuter's terminology, his 'omnipresence') even when physically absent. Otto's great ancestors continue to shine even after their death, and the power of Otto III himself extends across his kingdom like the light of the sun. His imperial authority and presence are not restricted to his physical location, but reach 'ubique' ('everywhere'). Whilst Abbo's vision of Otto's universal power represents an ideal rather than the political reality of late tenth-century Germany,⁹⁷ his highly-developed use of metaphor reflects the widespread use of symbolism (whether in text or through ceremony and ritual) involved in the promotion of sacral kingship in the period.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Sot, 'Pratique et Usage de l'histoire', p. 212.

⁹⁶ See for example his acrostic 'Ardua Conexæ', line 13, in Lapidge and Baker, 'More Acrostic Verse', p. 14.

⁹⁷ Marco Mostert comments that 'unlike Abbo's picture of a centralized theocratic monarchy, [the political structure was] a patchwork of duchies and super-counties' controlled by local powers. Mostert, *The Political Theology of Abbo of Fleury*, p. 181.

⁹⁸ See for example K.J. Leyser, *Medieval Germany and its Neighbours, 900–1250* (London, 1982), pp. 95–96. Henry Mayr-Harting characterises the tenth century in Ottonian Germany as 'an age of high symbolism'. Mayr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos in Early Ottonian Germany* (Oxford, 2007), p. 225.

The prevalence of astronomical and cosmological imagery in the acrostic to Otto can of course be associated with Abbo's own expertise in science and *computus*. In addition to his scientific treatises, Michael Lapidge and Peter S. Baker have edited several poems either by Abbo or associated with him which occur in scientific manuscripts and which use acrostic forms to show off extensive computistical and astronomical learning.⁹⁹ Undoubtedly, the metaphorical and lexical preferences of Abbo's poem are shaped in part by his background in medieval science, here transposed and applied to the genre of political panegyric. But the epistolary poem to Otto may also be connected with the specific use of astronomical symbolism by the rulers of the Ottonian and Salian dynasties (as, to an extent, with the Carolingians before them) to represent royal power and authority. Stephen McCluskey describes the 'adoption of the antique custom of stellar ceremonial mantles' in the period, commenting that '[s]uch mantles present the ruler as a Solomonic or Platonic philosopher-king, garbed in wisdom, and assimilate his reign to the reign of God over the universe, which He rules by weight and number and measure'.¹⁰⁰ Thus, these mantles align the emperor's rule with God's omnipotence (and omnipresence), simultaneously associating royal power with light and radiance. The earliest mantle still extant dates to the reign of Emperor Henry II (1002–24),¹⁰¹ but the use of astronomical or cosmic imagery to shape expressions of power and authority is also prominent in the late tenth century and certainly current in the period within which Abbo was writing.¹⁰² On a wider level, the imagery of light and radiance associated with the ruler in Abbo's acrostic to Otto can be situated within long-established traditions and conventions in late antique and early medieval panegyric. Sabine G. MacCormack has shown how the image of the ruler 'as a star, as a vision of light' was highly prominent in late antique literary panegyric, particularly in association with texts which celebrate 'accession and arrival', or the symbolic ritual of *adventus* in which an emperor entered a country or city within his possession to display and assert his authority.¹⁰³ Abbo's poem to Otto aligns with all of these conventional contexts for the use of light imagery in panegyric: the poem celebrates a young ruler who is just acceding to his full power as emperor,¹⁰⁴ and it also encourages Otto to demonstrate this emergent power and authority by entering Rome and reclaiming the city. The text presents a highly-classicised model of accession, epiphany and *adventus* to which Otto can aspire.

Scott Gwara comments on the 'tradition of addressing acrostic verses to the Ottonian emperors, just as acrostics had been addressed to the Carolingians in past centuries', arguing that '[b]y referring to Otto's *imperium* in an acrostic, a form

⁹⁹ Lapidge and Baker, 'More Acrostic Verse'.

¹⁰⁰ Stephen C. McCluskey, *Astronomies and Cultures in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 141.

¹⁰¹ McCluskey, *Astronomies and Cultures*, p. 141.

¹⁰² See Mayr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos*, pp. 195–225, esp. p. 225, where he looks in particular at uses of symbolism derived from Martianus Capella.

¹⁰³ Sabine G. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1981), pp. 17–84, esp. pp. 45 (cited), and 28–29.

¹⁰⁴ Otto was only seventeen years old when the poem was composed.

which Optatianus once used to address Constantine and which the Carolingians later co-opted, Abbo shows himself as a pillar of Otto's intellectual *renovatio*.¹⁰⁵ Apart from this prestigious literary heritage, the acrostic is also a particularly appropriate form for Abbo's material here. Whilst the poem centres on imagery of light, shining and the ruler's radiance, the acrostic form reflects the text's key phrase ('Otto ualens caesar, nostro tu cede coturno!') in repeated patterns across the page. Just as Abbo promotes a concept of kingship based on the symbol of far-reaching light and brilliance, so this is mirrored visually in the 'reflections' of Otto's greatness on the page. Panegyric traditionally reflects the glory and greatness of the ruler: here the structural form of the poem participates in this enterprise. Yet the prominent visual presence of reflection and mirroring in the acrostic to Otto may also be understood in other ways. The poem can be interpreted as a variant of the medieval literary tradition of 'mirrors for princes' in which a didactic text provided the noble reader with opportunities for self-reflection, contemplation and improvement.¹⁰⁶ Just seventeen years old when the poem was written, Otto was a suitable candidate for advice and guidance, offered by the benevolent father-figure of 'Abbo abba'. Thus the central conceit of reflection, so prominent in the visual construction of the acrostic, foregrounds the tensions and ambivalences at the heart of the poem. The text is both panegyric and hortatory, reflecting the glory of Otto and his ancestors even as it calls for the king to reflect critically on his own actions and on royal policy. This pervasive ambivalence parallels that of Abbo's central assertion in the poem that '[s]olus ... regnans absens' ('you alone reign though absent'). The composition and dispatch of the poem itself shows that the king's absence was indeed a problem, compromising his authority and influence in Rome. Yet the text demonstrates Abbo's dual response to this acute political crisis, and to the wider challenges presented by the practice of itinerant kingship. Abbo both recalls Otto to Rome to intervene, and employs a metaphorical system to articulate the emperor's enduring, omnipresent power even when physically remote. Imagery of light and radiance is at the centre of this symbolic representation of the absent ruler and patron.

Slightly earlier than Abbo's epistolary poem to Otto, his two acrostics to Dunstan also employ imagery of light and reflection, as well as a range of other strategies, to promote the power and authority of (in this case) the spiritual patron across physical space and distance. Both of these poems were composed during Abbo's period as *armarius*, or director of the monastic school, at Ramsey Abbey (late 985 to autumn 987), a position which he may have taken up due to his dissatisfaction at not being elected abbot of Fleury after the death of Amalbert in April 985.¹⁰⁷ Issues of absence and removal evidently figured prominently for Abbo during this period, both in terms of his distance from the community in Fleury and, eventually, in terms of the associations which he formed and left behind in England. In the *Questiones*

¹⁰⁵ Gwara, 'Three Acrostic Poems', p. 230 and p. 214.

¹⁰⁶ For an overview of this genre see Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, pp. 177, 336.

¹⁰⁷ Gwara, 'Three Acrostic Poems', p. 204.

Grammaticales, Abbo describes his arrival in England after a storm at sea, and summarises his experiences there.

...sedatis fluctibus marine tempestatis, ad id deueri exilii cum mira tranquillitate tam uasti equoris; ubi, dum quibusdam studiorum occupationibus detinear, leuior fit calamitatis miseria quam tolero, quandoquidem beniuolentia eorum cum quibus habito ad id me compellit ut non solum pro posse uelim fraternis necessitatibus succurrere, se setiam ultra uires uelle.¹⁰⁸

...the floods of the sea-storm calmed, I arrived at the place of exile with a wonderful calm of the vast sea; where, while I was detained by studious occupations, the misery of the torments which I endured became lighter, since the benevolence of those amongst whom I lived encouraged me not only to wish to meet the needs of my brothers, according to the my abilities, but also the wish (to reach) beyond my capabilities.

In the next chapter, Abbo again refers to himself as 'exilius' ('exile'), whilst also addressing his English audience as 'carissimi' ('most beloved') and stating his wish that the *Questiones* should form 'monimenta' ('memorials') of his time as an exile in Ramsey. These passages in the *Questiones Grammaticales* thus call attention to Abbo's ambivalent attitudes to his period in England. He uses conventional language of exile and misery, but also writes of the strong friendships and bonds formed with the community there, and constructs the *Questiones* as a text which will embody that association even after his return to Fleury. The two acrostic poems to Dunstan, 'Summe sacer' and 'O presul Dunstane', reflect one of the most significant relationships which Abbo formed whilst in England. Scott Gwara notes that both of these poems 'owe their preservation' to Byrhtferth of Ramsey, Abbo's pupil, and that, amongst other manuscript locations, they are both included in Part V of the *Vita Sancti Oswaldi*, although the acrostic layout is not retained here.¹⁰⁹ Gwara has commented on stylistic and structural similarities across Abbo's acrostic verse, noting that the two poems to Dunstan in particular are influenced by the acrostics of the fourth-century poet Publilius Optatianus Porphyrius to Emperor Constantine and show an interest in the renewal of classical learning.¹¹⁰ The poems commemorate Abbo's privileged relationship with Dunstan, celebrating the spiritual patronage and learning he received during his potentially vulnerable time away from Fleury at Ramsey.¹¹¹ The particularly complex, elaborate forms of these acrostics (especially 'O

¹⁰⁸ Abbo Floriacensis, *Questiones Grammaticales*, ed. A. Guerreau-Jalabert (Paris, 1982), Chapter 3, p. 211.

¹⁰⁹ Gwara, 'Three Acrostic Poems', pp. 205–6. The manuscript containing the *Vita Oswaldi* is British Library, MS Cotton Nero E.i pars i.

¹¹⁰ Gwara, 'Three Acrostic Poems', pp. 208–10. Gwara notes that this influence is primarily structural and stylistic rather than thematic.

¹¹¹ See Mostert, *The Political Theology of Abbo of Fleury*, pp. 40–41.

presul Dunstane') represent an appropriate gift for Dunstan, who was himself an accomplished poet and composer of acrostic verse.¹¹²

The first of these poems is formed on the acrostic 'Summe sacer, te summa salus tueatur amicis!' ('Highest priest, may the highest salvation protect you for your friends!'). The poem foregrounds Abbo's identity as a foreigner, distant from his homeland, describing his voice as a poet as 'Exul in orbe alio' ('exile in another world', line 9). The text emphasises Abbo's indebtedness to Dunstan for his teaching, explaining how the poet's voice 'creuit' ('grew strong') with Dunstan's help and support. Dunstan is described as 'plenus pietatis' ('full of mercy', line 4) in his patronage of Abbo, and 'solito largus' ('generous as usual' line 8). Abbo writes that his newly-strengthened poetic voice

Mira refert, quod primus eam dignatus eoam
Munere donasti, donum reputando supernum,
Anglia cui tandem cantat sic uoce latina:
Summe sacer, te summa salus tueatur amicis!

...reports marvels, because you, reflecting on the heavenly reward, first deigned to endow my eastern voice with a gift, at last it sings to you of English matters in the Latin tongue thus: Highest priest: may the highest salvation protect you for your friends! (lines 15–18)

These lines suggest the possibility that Dunstan may have taught Abbo hermeneutic Latin, or influenced the development of his art as a poet in some way.¹¹³ Certainly the poem presents Dunstan as a patron who has given Abbo the gift of poetry ('donasti', 'donum'): the complex acrostic given in turn by Abbo repays that debt in appropriate literary form.

Throughout the poem, Dunstan is presented as a powerful, generous patron whose influence extends widely. As with the acrostic to Otto III, imagery of light, radiance and reflection plays an important role in the panegyric here. Abbo begins by celebrating Dunstan's virtue, offering a series of epithets which represent his multiple spiritual roles.

Virtutis uerae speculo sub carnis amictu
Mundo fulgentem, qui magnus culmine moru,
Munificus pastor, hominum spes, ara reorum
Esse uideris...

Shining to the world in a mirror of true virtue beneath the mantle of the flesh, you are seen to be outstanding in the height of your morals, a generous shepherd, the hope of men, and an altar for the guilty (lines 2–5).

¹¹² See Michael Lapidge, 'The Hermeneutic Style in tenth-century Anglo-Latin literature', in his *Anglo-Latin Literature 900–1066*, pp. 105–50, p. 133 and Lapidge, 'St Dunstan's Latin Poetry', *ibid.*, pp. 151–56.

¹¹³ See discussion in Gwara, 'Three Acrostic Poems', p. 219.

Shining out to all the world, Dunstan is a mirror of virtue whose influence and spiritual patronage extend far beyond his bodily physical presence. The construction '[e]sse uideris' ('you are seen to be') relates directly to this metaphor in which Dunstan's spiritual worth is represented in terms of radiance and its beholding by others. In the prominent location immediately following the second statement of the main acrostic phrase ('Summe sacer...'), Abbo again uses imagery of light and shining to symbolise Dunstan's far-reaching influence as a spiritual patron and leader.

Angelicam qui fers faciem de luce superna,
Lacteolus uultu, pollens ex ordine presul,
Vir patriae carus seu ciuibus, utilis actu,
Solus...

You who bear a visage angelic from celestial radiance, milky in aspect, (are) an extraordinarily powerful bishop, a man dear to his nation and its citizens, alone useful in action... (lines 19–22)

Whilst the association of virtue and light or brightness is a familiar convention of early medieval hagiography, as well as panegyric literature, here its juxtaposition with Dunstan's role as a powerful bishop and figure of national influence suggests its use to represent the wide extent of his spiritual patronage and guidance. Since, at the time when Abbo's poem was written, Dunstan had entered into retirement at Canterbury and had largely withdrawn from public life, this assertion of presence in absence has a particularly purposeful value in promoting his continued authority and asserting his continuing spiritual influence throughout England. And here again, just as in Abbo's later acrostic to Otto III, the concept of shining and reflection extends beyond the content of the poem and into form itself. As a gift to Dunstan, the poem is a mirror which reflects his excellence, and, for wider audiences, it forms (like Dunstan himself) a '[v]irtutis uerae speculo' ('mirror of true virtue', line 2) for instruction and emulation. This image of the mirror, introduced by Abbo in the first line of the poem after the initial statement of the acrostic phrase, calls attention to the acrostic form itself as a special kind of literary mirroring, with the salutation to Dunstan reflected multiple times across the grid of text.¹¹⁴ Beneath the panegyric rhetoric, 'Summe sacer' is grounded on issues of – and perhaps, to an extent, anxieties about – absence and physical removal. Abbo, estranged from his home monastery of Fleury, expresses gratitude for Dunstan's patronage and carefully consolidates this advantageous relationship with a commemorative poem. Dunstan himself, now removed from the court and public life in his retirement at Canterbury, is represented as a saintly patron whose authority and influence will extend far beyond the limitations of his physical presence.

Abbo's second acrostic to Dunstan also includes a striking image of light and radiance, declaring in one short, emphatic statement that '[t]otus ... candes' ('all of you shines', line 28). A similar suggestion of Dunstan as a light or beacon may also be present in the description of him as '[u]ir feruens animis, puro feruentior aestu' ('a

¹¹⁴ See the reconstruction by Gwara, 'Three Acrostic Poems', p. 215.

man burning in spirit, hotter than pure heat', line 30). The poem is built on the acrostic 'O presul dunstane probus, sine fine ualeto!' ('O honourable Bishop Dunstan, farewell without end!', line 1), celebrating Dunstan as 'innocent teacher' ('innocent teacher', line 6), '[s]umme patrone' ('highest patron', line 10) and 'pater' ('father', line 31). Again, Abbo presents his own talents as a poet with playful modesty and self-deprecation, suggesting Dunstan's role as a teacher.

Rumpe moras; ne sis durus cui ludo parumper
Inque tuis tutatis primi hic iam carmina; noli
Stertere, sed presens des ei uortier aures,
Memet enim satis ore moues ut talia dictem
Et lætor quod adesdes piis addiscis opime...

Stop your delay; do not be hard, for whom I play a little while. Speak here the songs of ... first ... now! Do not snore, but, present, let your ears be turned to him. For by your voice you move me sufficiently to compose such things, and I rejoice that you learn to assist the pious abundantly (lines 19–23).

In indirect and light-hearted terms, these lines request some form of acknowledgement from Dunstan: Abbo requires his patron to be present ('presens') as an audience and engage with his work. Gwara comments on the particularly sophisticated and complex form of 'O presul Dunstane', remarking that the poem is 'unparalleled in the history of the acrostic genre' and that, '[i]f only from a formal standpoint... it holds an important place in the corpus of acrostic verse'.¹¹⁵ In this poem, it is the *versus intexti* which perhaps carry the most significance in terms of Abbo's presentation of his relationship with his patron and promotion of the efficacy of absent patronage. Two of the three *versus* hidden within the acrostic request some form of response or acknowledgement from Dunstan, simultaneously presenting formulations of presence-in-absence and patronage despite physical removal or distance. The encoded *versus*, hidden for the skilled reader to discover, state that 'Oro, serene sacer, memoris memor otius esto!' ('I pray, serene priest, that you straightaway be mindful of him who is mindful of you') and 'O uir adesto sacer quouis sacrator aequo!' ('Be at my side, O holy man, more devout than any of your peers!'). Here Abbo suggests how memory and affect may connect individuals across physical distance, and how Dunstan may be present with him through spiritual fellowship despite his bodily absence. For Abbo, aware that his stay in England was likely only to be temporary, the expediency of asserting the viability of spiritual patronage despite physical separation is clear. The term 'otius' ('serene') in the first *versus intextus* may also provide another significant clue to Abbo's agendas and motivations in writing the poem. Dunstan had now entered the *otium* of monastic retirement at Canterbury, removing himself, bodily, from worldly affairs. Keen to maintain and reinforce his relationship with this still-influential figure of spiritual patronage, Abbo uses the gift of the poem as a way of gaining access to Dunstan in his retreat, and as a strategy for cementing their (apparent) special connection as

¹¹⁵ Gwara, 'Three Acrostic Poems', p. 210.

teacher and pupil. As with the acrostic to Emperor Otto III, there are tensions and ambivalences in 'O presul dunstane'. Abbo evidently seeks some kind of response or acknowledgement from Dunstan, withdrawn into his retirement at Canterbury. Yet the poem also – particularly in the *versus intextus* – asserts the possibility of spiritual allegiance and patronage without the need for any physical meeting or material manifestation. Once again, Abbo's poem presents a dual response to the challenges of absent patronage, combining the practical with the ideological and providing a self-authorising, self-legitimising claim to Dunstan's special protection.

Although responding to different political situations and immediate contexts, all of these acrostic poems by Abbo of Fleury promote an ideology of viable, vital patronage and power despite physical absence. A range of rhetorical strategies reinforce the power of the absent patron – whether secular or spiritual – with the recurrent imagery of radiance and reflection emerging as a prominent motif. Clearly, this system of imagery is more fully developed in the epistolary poem to Emperor Otto, perhaps because this text was produced later in Abbo's career, or because here he engages more emphatically with established continental panegyric and ceremonial traditions involving cosmic and astronomical symbols. Yet this imagery is present, to varying extents, across all these poems, both in their content and in their acrostic structure which forms a series of visual mirrors and reflections on the page.¹¹⁶ In these complex poems, economies of light, reflection and vision parallel the collaborative enterprises between patron, author and reader. The sophisticated, self-conscious and self-referential textual strategies employed in these acrostics raise questions of cultural heritage and influence. Clearly, the poems draw on traditions in late antique and early medieval panegyric, modelled particularly, as Gwara demonstrates, on the acrostic verse of Optatianus. But how should we situate these poems by Abbo within the context of late tenth-century literary culture and exchange between England and the continent? In their depictions of the patron and patronage, do they represent the transposition of continental ideology and rhetoric into England, or the influence of English literary idioms and conceptual systems on continental writing? Abbo himself suggests in his acrostics to Dunstan that he learned much of his technique as a poet in England, perhaps indicating that the hermeneutic style favoured by the Benedictine reformers played a significant role in the development of his writing.¹¹⁷ Yet his poems exemplify the cross-fertilisation between England and the continent in the period, both in terms of the development of ideas about power, patronage and authority, and the formulation of a poetic discourse

¹¹⁶ It might also be possible to interpret Abbo's poem to Ramsey, included in *VSO*, iii.18 as a poem to a kind of patron – Abbo's *alma mater* of Ramsey Abbey. Here, too, imagery of light and reflection is prominent, playing with the situation of Ramsey surrounded by fenland waters which reflect the starlit night sky. These stars reflect the learning at Ramsey which shines out beyond its walls to all the English. The poem also exploits the structural possibilities of couplets and various aural parallels to set up further 'reflections' or 'echoes' across the text. See Catherine A.M. Clarke, 'Panegyric and Reflection in a Poem by Abbo of Fleury to Ramsey Abbey', in *Anglo-Saxon England and the Continent*, ed. Hans Sauer and Joanna Story (Arizona, 2010), pp. 293–302.

¹¹⁷ See Lapidge, 'The Hermeneutic Style', and Gwara, 'Three Acrostic Poems', p. 219.

(drawing on the idioms of Anglo-Latin literature, continental panegyric conventions and late antique models) for their articulation and promotion.

The need for literary strategies and rhetorical techniques to promote the power and influence of the absent patron was clearly not new and unprecedented in the late tenth century. Despite the conspicuous increase in ideologies, and even practical implementations, of systems of centralised power and authority in the period – such as the organisation of the Benedictine reform or Edgar's promotion of the ideal of the unified 'kingdom of the English' – there had always been specific situations in which it had been necessary to promote and legitimise the power of a distant or absent patron. One particular example might be found in Æthelstan's earlier ambition to formulate a concept of a 'kingdom of the English' in the early tenth century, and his appropriation of a range of authorising symbols to support this project.¹¹⁸ Mechthild Gretsch has recently discussed Æthelstan's efforts to establish a spiritual patron for this new unified nation of the English, examining the ways in which Cuthbert is adopted as a figure capable of uniting the disparate peoples and regions within Britain.

The newly-forged 'Kingdom of the English' needed pan-English saints to form what in modern jargon would be called a 'corporate identity', and Cuthbert, not having been actively involved in contemporary politics, had a better potential to be developed into such a truly pan-English saint than (say) Kings Oswald of Northumbria or Edmund of East Anglia, both of whom were firmly rooted in the history of their respective peoples.¹¹⁹

Both Gretsch and Karmen Lenz have looked at the texts associated with Cuthbert in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 183, a manuscript given by Æthelstan to Chester-le-Street but probably produced at Glastonbury.¹²⁰ They identify in particular the use of metaphors of light and radiance to promote Cuthbert as a spiritual patron whose far-reaching influence extends despite his physical absence, examining resonances with similar imagery in the metrical *Vita Sancti Cuthberti* and Bede's eighth-century promotion of the saint as a patron for all the English people.¹²¹ Indeed, Cuthbert's absence in death itself allows him to become a figure amenable to appropriation, adaptation and political use, transcending the chronological and regional limitations of his historical life (just as Æthelstan aspires to kingship across the whole nation of the English, reaching beyond the limitations of his own geographical presence). Clearly these Cuthbert texts intersect with wider traditions in hagiography and conventional processes in the establishment and geographical

¹¹⁸ See for example Michael Wood, 'The Making of King Aethelstan's Empire: An English Charlemagne?' in *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society: Studies presented to J.M. Wallace-Hadrill*, ed. Patrick Wormald et al. (Oxford, 1983), pp. 250–72 and Foot, 'The Making of *Anglecynn*', pp. 47–48.

¹¹⁹ Gretsch, *Ælfric and the Cult of Saints*, p. 96.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 75 and 94.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 75–116 and Karmen Lenz, 'Liturgical Readings of the Cathedral Office for Saint Cuthbert', *The Heroic Age* 12 (2009) (www.mun.ca/mst/heroicage/issues/12/lenz.php, accessed June 2009).

extension of saints' cults.¹²² Yet they also suggest possible ways in which, well before the late tenth or early eleventh centuries, texts could respond to specific political needs and select appropriate systems of imagery (here, once again, including metaphors of light and radiance) to articulate and promote the power and influence of the absent patron.

Whilst not a new issue in late tenth-century England, ideological and administrative changes associated with processes such as the Benedictine reform and Edgar's concerted efforts to realise a single 'kingdom of the English' meant that absent or remote patronage, together with the need for literary strategies to promote the power of the absent patron, became more prevalent and acute. The texts discussed in this chapter show that such strategies are inevitably genre-specific, varying according to literary context as well as author and intended audience. The prose hagiographic texts examined here, the *Vita Sancti Oswaldi* and the two earliest *Vitae* of Dunstan, are generally less metaphorical in nature than the verse acrostics of Abbo of Fleury, instead employing affective language, epistolary conventions and narratives of divine visions and spiritual fellowship to demonstrate the efficacy of patronage across physical distance. Abbo's highly allusive poetry melds representational traditions from hagiography and secular panegyric, appropriating multivalent symbols such as light and radiance to signify the power of his absent patrons, both saintly and royal. It is not possible to identify universal strategies for articulating the power and authority of the absent patron: instead, each of these texts negotiates particular historical and political circumstances, draws on specific literary and cultural traditions, and presents its own rhetorical responses.

It is also impossible here to reach conclusions about any specifically Anglo-Saxon traditions in the conceptualisation and representation of absent patronage in the late tenth century. David Rollason has cautioned that it could be argued that the *Lives* of Dunstan by B and Adelard might be 'simply reflecting continental rather than English attitudes' and Julia Barrow has also suggested how these texts, along with the *Vita Oswaldi*, might reflect continental ideologies and practices.¹²³ What all of the texts examined here do show are the cultural economies sustained between England and the continent in the late tenth century, and the ways in which political necessities and representational traditions in both Anglo-Saxon England and Ottonian Germany helped to shape concepts and textual portrayals of the absent patron. Indeed, many of the issues of patronage and absence negotiated in these texts are themselves products of the active, vibrant cultural contacts and exchanges continuing between England and the continent in the period. Each with their own vested interests in promoting the viability and efficacy of absent patronage, these texts deploy a range of strategies to promote the power and authority of the patron despite physical distance or removal. Whilst they each make their own practical claims on their patrons (or prospective patrons), they also develop a concept of patronage as an

¹²² For discussions of the geographical expansion of the cult of Cuthbert, for example, see the later essays in *St Cuthbert, his Cult and his Community to AD 1200*, ed. Gerald Bonner *et al.* (Woodbridge, 1989).

¹²³ Rollason, 'The Concept of Sanctity', p. 271; Barrow, 'Demonstrative behaviour', p. 148.

abstract idea or as a spiritual, intellectual, affective practice, which is not necessarily founded or solely dependent on physical interaction at a local or material level. Thus these texts help to legitimise a more abstract, ideological system of patronage and power, highly expedient in this late tenth-century context, in which patrons and their dependents are tied together in invisible, yet still vital, economies of fellowship, allegiance and obligation.

Power and Performance: Authors and Patrons in late Anglo-Saxon Texts

This chapter will explore ways in which relationships between authors and patrons (whether real or imagined) are constructed in a selection of tenth and eleventh-century texts. It will look at a range of sources to examine how literary patronage, as represented in late Anglo-Saxon texts, is figured through the performance of a repertoire of roles and the adoption of different personae. These carefully-shaped and sustained textual performances allow author and patron to assume different (and often shifting) places within the hierarchies and economies of power and agency involved in literary production. These textual performances also involve complex networks of complicity and collaboration. For example, in cases where real patrons (that is, known historical figures connected with the production or reception of the work) are involved, we find evidence of complicity between author and patron in shaping and accepting the roles assigned to each other within the text. Across the texts examined here, the complicity of the audience also plays a major part, in both recognising the conventions and tropes through which these performed roles are cued, and in decoding the systems of hierarchy, power and economy implied.

This discussion will pay particular attention to how the performance of a range of gendered roles by author and patron can provide a metaphorical vocabulary for articulating the hierarchies and economies of agency involved in literary production. Across these texts, we find a range of variously gendered roles and relational identities which are inhabited by authors and patrons (both male and female) in order to figure their different, and often fluid, positions within the real or imagined interactions and hierarchies which enable the production of a text. The performance of different roles can configure the relationships and hierarchies between authors and patrons in a variety of ways. The most prominent gendered roles presented in these late Anglo-Saxon texts include those of muse, mother, handmaid, servant, brother, sister, lady and lover – though others also occur which are more ambiguous or problematic. These different roles bring with them complex and shifting economies of service, desire, affective and even erotic attachment, and power. Whilst the majority of gendered roles performed in these texts do correspond with the genders of author and patron as historical figures, it is not always so straightforward: the repertoire of roles

available within the space of the text can clearly extend beyond, or move between, the normative socially-constructed subjects of masculine and feminine. Certainly, these texts imply no fixed hierarchy between masculine and feminine roles, but rather suggest that each can be placed differently within different metaphorical systems, allowing ideas of power and agency to be expressed and nuanced in changing ways. The textual deployment of these gendered metaphors and performance of these various roles allow the hierarchy of relationship between author and patron to be constantly re-modelled and re-negotiated, calling attention to the different kinds of agency and authority involved (or imagined to be involved) in literary production. The performance of these relational gendered roles can also be understood as a kind of metadiscourse, which provides a means of articulating and reflecting upon the complex series of transactions and exchanges between author, patron and audience involved in textual production.

These issues of power and performance will be examined here through readings of a selection of texts. In each of these chosen sources, gender, gender roles and the interactions between masculine and feminine are major textual concerns, meaning that the language of gender emerges as a particularly appropriate metaphorical vocabulary through which to express and explore relationships and forms of collaboration between author and patron. First, notions of performance, identity and the potential adoption of different gender roles will be established through a discussion of Cynewulf's Old English poem *Elene* – a text which has received sustained critical attention with regard to its presentation of gendered identities and activities.¹ Beyond the text's depiction of the gendered roles and practices adopted by its protagonists at different points within the narrative, the poem also uses the metaphorical vocabulary of gender in order to view the relationships and economies between Cynewulf, its author, and his imagined patrons (Elene and God) through a variety of different lenses. This text demonstrates how the performance of different roles and adoption of different personae can express the variety of interactions and shifting relationships between author and patron. The use of relational gendered roles to express concepts of authorship, power and patronage does seem more prominent and self-conscious in texts which are concerned in other ways with gender roles and identities – either, as in the case of *Elene*, through the depiction of a (complex) central female protagonist, or in texts which reflect the collaboration of male authors and female patrons.

The chapter will go on to look at two important texts written for female patrons in late Anglo-Saxon England, the *Encomium Emmae Reginae* and *Vita Ædwardi Regis*. With their attention to the historical reality of female patronage, the significance and possibility of gender roles and identities as presented in each text are particularly acute. Both of these texts are themselves products of a wider culture of performance and display at the late Anglo-Saxon court.² This political context intersects with the

¹ See discussion later in this chapter.

² See for example Pauline Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith: Queenship and Women's Power in Eleventh-Century England* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 101–2. Stafford also employs an extended metaphor of performance, involving 'scripts', acting and improvisation, to describe roles and identities in the

literary culture of self-conscious citation, allusion and appropriation of models from classical and biblical mythology embodied in these texts. In both the *Encomium* and *Vita*, author and patron are written into a range of different roles, figuring their interaction and engagement in varying ways. Whilst the *Encomium Emmae Reginae* and *Vita Ædwardi* may initially seem to belong to a very different literary tradition and cultural context from that of Cynewulf's *Elene*, recent scholarship has called attention to some aspects of the shared ideologies of gender, power and patronage which underpin these texts. This discussion will explore how all of these texts variously exploit the possibilities of performance and adopted personae to allow the collaboration of author and patron to be represented in a range of shifting, fluid and sometimes ambiguous ways.

Any discussion which looks at the intersection of performance and gender will inevitably call up associations with the work of Judith Butler and Butlerian theorists on gender and subjectivity. This chapter is indeed influenced by Butlerian theory but, crucially, the focus here on performing and playing with gendered roles in the context of text and authorship must be clearly differentiated from Butler's notion of 'performativity' – especially in her later revisions to and defences of her work on gender. Butler clearly distinguishes her concept of 'constructivism' from that of 'artifice', stressing especially that 'performativity' equates with neither 'free play nor theatrical self-presentation' and is different from the mere notion of 'performance'.³ Rather, the Butlerian theory of performativity is inherently linked with 'iterability': with repetition, ritual and the constraining biological constraints and social norms which together control and 'impel' the formation of subjectivity.⁴ In the Anglo-Saxon sources examined here, we find instead experimentation and play with different roles and personae (whilst inevitably shaped by cultural conventions and gender norms) within the limited space of the text.⁵ Rather than the sustained performativity which conditions gender subjectivities, these are specific acts of performance which Joyce Tally Lionarons, for example, in her article on the construction of gender in *Elene*, prefers to describe as the 'citation' of alternative gender roles and identities.⁶ Beyond a specific focus on gender, this notion of performance or citation intersects with Gerald Bond's work on the formation of identities in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, which emphasises the availability of a 'repertory of self-representations' which may be selected and evoked in different contexts.⁷

late Anglo-Saxon court (see especially p. 55). Elizabeth Tyler, too, comments on 'the political importance of display in the late Anglo-Saxon court'. See Elizabeth M. Tyler, "'When wings incarnadine with gold are spread": the *Vita Ædwardi Regis* and the display of treasure at the court of Edward the Confessor', in *Treasure in the Medieval West* (York, 2000), ed. Elizabeth Tyler, pp. 83–107, especially pp. 83, 101.

³ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (London, 1993), pp. 94–95.

⁴ Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, p. 95; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, second edition (London, 1999), p. xv.

⁵ Stafford's metaphor of 'scripts' and 're-writing' in terms of the formation of social identities is again helpful here. See Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith*, p. 55.

⁶ Joyce Tally Lionarons, 'Cultural Syncretism and the Construction of Gender in Cynewulf's *Elene*', *Exemplaria* 10 (1998), 51–68, esp. pp. 55–56.

⁷ Bond, *The Loving Subject*, p. 12.

However, despite the important distinctions which must be drawn between 'performativity' and 'performance', the discussion of roles and personae in this chapter does relate to elements of Butlerian theory, reminding us that different – and sometimes surprising – practices and identities can be assumed in different contexts, even if they do not necessarily transform continuing social norms and constraints. Stacy Klein has commented on this world of 'playful possibilities' often imagined by feminists, calling attention to the special power of texts to provide a space for experimentation with roles and identities. She observes that 'feminist criticism is driven by the belief that representational systems such as literature may help to create such a world [of playful possibility] – by contributing to enhanced understandings of gender norms and their construction and by enabling readers to envision new ways of living as gendered beings'.⁸ In the context of this chapter, the notion of performance calls attention to the ways in which the imagined roles of patron and author are not rigidly defined or hierarchically ordered: by being aligned with different assumed personae and variously gendered roles and identities they can be constructed and inter-related in different and changing ways. The terms of this analysis allow us to reflect upon the intersections between patronage, power and performance and the ways in which the roles of patron and author are shaped at particular textual moments by different literary conventions, political demands and imagined configurations of power.

A large body of recent scholarship on the Old English poem *Elene* has explored the ways in which a variety of gendered practices and identities are adopted within the text in order to express different kinds of agency and power. These include the roles played by the poet Cynewulf himself, whose persona is introduced in the elegiac epilogue and runic signature. An overview of this criticism – as well as extension and development of the readings offered by earlier scholars – will help to frame and establish the approach of this discussion to concepts of performance and patronage. *Elene* has usually been regarded, on the basis of internal linguistic evidence, as a late eighth-century or earlier ninth-century composition originating in Anglia or possibly Northumbria.⁹ But other possibilities remain: Patrick Conner, for example, has put forward the alternative argument that all of the Cynewulfian poems are products of the late tenth-century Benedictine reform period.¹⁰ In its place within the Vercelli

⁸ Stacy S. Klein, 'Centralizing feminism in Anglo-Saxon literary studies: *Elene*, motherhood, and history', in *Readings in Medieval Texts: Interpreting Old and Middle English Literature*, ed. David F. Johnson and Elaine M. Trehearne (Oxford, 2005), pp. 149–65, pp. 149–50. Butlerian theory has also been productively applied to gender roles as presented in early medieval texts by Carol J. Clover, 'Regardless of Sex: Men, Women and Power in Early Northern Europe', and Allen J. Frantzen, 'When Women Aren't Enough', both included in a special issue of *Speculum* (68, 1993), 363–87 and 445–71. This special issue of the journal continues to provoke debate: see for example Diane Watt, 'Why Men Still Aren't Enough', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16 (2010), 451–64.

⁹ See R.D. Fulk, 'Cynewulf: Canon, Dialect, and Date', in *The Cynewulf Reader*, ed. Robert E. Bjork (London, 2001), pp. 3–21, p. 16, or for an earlier discussion, *Cynewulf's Elene*, ed. P.O.E. Gradon (London, 1958), pp. 9–15 and 22–23.

¹⁰ Patrick W. Conner, 'On Dating Cynewulf', in *The Cynewulf Reader*, ed. Robert E. Bjork (London, 2001), pp. 23–55.

Book, the manuscript version of *Elene* can certainly be dated to the end of the tenth century, suggesting that the poem had a particular relevance and valency which caused it to be selected for audiences in this immediate historical and cultural context.¹¹ Based on a range of patristic sources, the poem narrates the search of Helen (Elene), mother of the Roman emperor Constantine, for the relics of the true cross on which Christ was crucified. The epilogue represents a personal meditation by Cynewulf, the poem's named author, on death and doomsday.

Much of the work on representations of gender in *Elene* has focused on the central female protagonist herself, examining the ways in which she performs a variety of different roles at different moments within the text. Critics have analysed Elene's representation of queenship and her role as Constantine's mother,¹² but have also called attention to the ways in which her actions within the poem challenge traditional gender norms as depicted in early medieval heroic literature. Lionarons argues that Elene's role within the poem 'force[s] her to act in ways culturally coded as masculine' or, in alternative terms, to 'cite masculine performative categories'.¹³ As a powerful war-leader who actively directs her troops in the quest to find the cross, Elene assumes many of the heroic, warrior roles associated with men, signalled in the poem by compounds such as 'guðcwen' ('battle-queen', line 254a) and 'sigecwen' ('victory-queen', line 260a) which conjoin concepts of noble femininity and (more usually masculine) military strength and triumph.¹⁴ For Lionarons, Elene's active role in the search for the cross even goes so far as to '(re)constitute her as a "masculinised" subject in relation to a "feminized" son' who remains, apparently passive, in Rome.¹⁵ Whilst such analysis foregrounds the ways in which variously gendered roles can signify different kinds of power and agency within the text, scholarship on gender in the poem has tended to focus most intensively on Elene's representation as a mother. Yet, even this discussion of Elene's motherhood demonstrates how it encompasses a range of different roles and personae. These multiple roles include Elene as mother of Constantine, spiritual mother of the Jewish character Judas, who converts to Christianity, and 'mother-muse' of the poem as a whole, acting as inspiration to the poet Cynewulf.¹⁶ Klein argues that Cynewulf imagines maternal roles which extend far beyond biology and even narrow social norms, 'expand[ing] definitions of motherhood to encompass roles that move far beyond the conception and bearing of

¹¹ In her work on *Elene*, Stacy Klein acknowledges the difficulties in defining the provenance of the poem, but argues that the period of the reception of the Vercelli Book can provide a productive framework for historicising the text. See Klein, 'Reading Queenship in Cynewulf's *Elene*', pp. 50–51. Catherine Karkov has suggested the possible interest of Edith, wife of King Edgar, in the cult of Helen and the cross, which might represent a further cultural relevance for audiences in the late tenth century. See Karkov, *The Ruler Portraits*, p. 116.

¹² Klein, 'Reading Queenship in Cynewulf's *Elene*' and 'Centralizing feminism'; Jane Chance, *Woman as Hero in Old English Literature* (Eugene, Oregon, 2005), pp. 47; Lionarons, 'Cultural Syncretism'.

¹³ Lionarons, 'Cultural Syncretism', pp. 55, 58.

¹⁴ See *ibid.*, pp. 57–58. All quotations from *Elene* are taken from the Gradon edition cited above.

¹⁵ Lionarons, 'Cultural Syncretism', p. 55.

¹⁶ Klein, 'Centralizing feminism', pp. 151–56; Lionarons, 'Cultural Syncretism', pp. 66–68.

children'.¹⁷ In *Elene*, then, the central female protagonist can be seen to perform a range of different personae at different points within the text, some located within (but extending and expanding) the range of possibilities associated with her gender as a woman, but others challenging and inverting traditional gender roles and relations.

In the transition to Cynewulf's elegiac epilogue and runic signature, the text's use of gendered roles and imagery becomes suggestive of the poet's position in relation to a range of imagined inspirations and patrons. Cynewulf's self-presentation, in the first lines of the epilogue, as one who 'wordcraeft wæf' ('wove the craft of words', line 1237a) has attracted the attention of a number of scholars, with Jane Chance initiating much of the discussion on the potential meanings of this passage. She suggests that:

The image of the artist Cynewulf weaving here recalls the angelic peace-weaver who similarly appeared before Constantine in his night of anguish to save him from despair, and of course the conventional Anglo-Saxon image of the woman as peace-weaver between two tribes – in a sense, Elene who brings peace and love to the previously bellicose Christians and Jews remaining behind in Jerusalem. The artist Cynewulf rescues himself through the writing of *Elene* to play a role similar to that of the angel and to Elene – or one might say that Elene herself inspired Cynewulf out of his anguish just as the angel inspired Constantine.¹⁸

Whilst the act of weaving has a wide range of associations with artistic creativity and poetic composition in Old English, evoking the patterns of interlace and the process of threading together formulaic elements to create new works,¹⁹ it is also intimately bound up with ideas of femininity and traditional female roles in Anglo-Saxon culture, forming, of course, the etymology of the word *wif* ('woman'). Chance's suggestion that the verb *wæf* here codes Cynewulf's activity as a poet as, in some way, feminine is compelling. Her comparison of the poet with the angel or heavenly 'friðowebba' ('peace-weaver', line 88) who appears to Constantine calls attention to another protagonist within the text who seems to perform both male and female roles.²⁰ Klein and Lionarons have also both suggested that the term *wæf* evokes a feminised role for Cynewulf, author of the poem, which mirrors that of his subject and spiritual or imaginative patron, Elene. Lionarons goes further to look at the complex oscillation of gender positions and relations in the epilogue, suggesting that '[i]t is a textually "masculinized" Elene who inspires Cynewulf through her construction in male-authored patristic texts, while Cynewulf's act of writing can be understood both as a 'masculine' literary activity, and as an act of weaving which recalls the identity of his female protagonist. Lionarons suggests that these

¹⁷ Klein, 'Centralizing feminism', p. 151.

¹⁸ Chance, *Woman as Hero*, p. 51.

¹⁹ See for example Chance, *Woman as Hero*, p. 5, or the general discussion of poetic composition and interlace in this volume, Chapter 1, pp. 12–13, and 39–41. More generally, the etymology of the modern English word *text* reflects a root in the Latin verb *texo* with its meanings 'to weave, to plait, or to interlace'. See Brian Stock, *Listening for the Text* (Philadelphia, 1996), p. 41.

²⁰ Lionarons, 'Cultural Syncretism', pp. 53–55.

'inversions' of gender categories continue to shift – and resist complete closure – even to the end of the poem, where Cynewulf could be understood as the 'father' of the text as much as the 'literary "son"' of Elene as his 'mother-muse'.²¹ It would be mistaken to attempt to fully disentangle or resolve these complex roles and inter-relationships. Instead, these analyses of the epilogue remind us that gender roles are not 'natural' or 'essential' here, but rather performed according to shifting configurations of power and hierarchy. In the epilogue, these flexible, playful gender roles form an appropriate symbolic system for articulating the fluid, multivalent relationships between text, author and (imagined) patron.

These established readings of gender in *Elene*, and especially of the gendered associations in Cynewulf's own role as poet, could be extended by further analysis of the epilogue to the poem in its wider literary and cultural context. In addition to its mirroring of Elene's own identity, the feminised image of Cynewulf as a 'weaver' is potentially suggestive of his status as a humble handmaid to his spiritual patron and her story as well as, ultimately, to God. Indeed, in the epilogue, God becomes the main authority in relation to whom Cynewulf positions himself and constructs his persona. After the initial lines, in which Cynewulf identifies himself as a poet who 'wordcræft wæf', the epilogue goes on to describe the vision of the cross which he has received from God, freeing him from a barren artistic period.²² There are strong parallels here with the language and imagery of the Anglo-Saxon Advent Antiphons, also developed in the Old English Advent Lyrics (also known as *Christ I*). It is possible that the epilogue plays deliberately with the idea of annunciation and its metaphorical associations, presenting the role of the poet in terms which – unexpectedly and surprisingly – recall Marian imagery. Indeed, the fact that the main poem ends with a reference to Mary and the idea of the doors of heaven being unlocked (a key metaphor in the Advent Antiphons) serves to foreground Marian associations in the first part of the epilogue, forming a bridging passage to the final imagery of judgement and the afterlife.²³ The intertwined notions of annunciation, advent, service and praise generated by the imagery of the epilogue could be understood as another framework for conceptualising the relationship between the poet and his sources of spiritual patronage, and as the final, most daring, experimentation with performance within the text.

The epilogue describes Cynewulf's religious and artistic inspiration in terms of a transformation from darkness to light, and especially as his unlocking and release from imprisonment. Cynewulf refers to his inspiration as a 'gife unscynde' ('worthy gift', line 1246b), which God 'amæt ȝ on gemynd beoget' ('measured out and poured into [my] mind', line 1247). Through this very intimate, personal visitation, Cynewulf moves from the darkness of 'nihtes nearwe' ('the prison of the night', line 1239a) into the 'torht' ('radiance', line 1248a) revealed by God. The idea of his

²¹ Lionarons, 'Cultural Syncretism', pp. 66–68.

²² Klein describes this as 'writer's block', focusing on the role of Elene as 'mother-muse' in releasing Cynewulf. Klein, 'Centralizing feminism', p. 156. However, the epilogue explicitly attributes this inspiring vision to God, the 'mægencyning' ('mighty King', line 1247).

²³ *Elene*, lines 1228b–35.

release from captivity is foregrounded emphatically by a series of parallel constructions and the use of internal rhyme. After being 'synnum asæled' and 'bitrum gebunden' ('shackled with sins', line 1243a and 'bitterly bound', line 1244a), Cynewulf experiences the grace of God, who:

bancofan onband, breostlocan onwand,
leoðucraeft onleac þæs ic lustum breac,
willum in worlde...

...unbound my flesh, unfastened my mind, unlocked the craft of poetry which
I have enjoyed with gladness in the world...²⁴

This imagery is paralleled strongly in the Old English Advent Lyrics, which are themselves based (loosely) on the Anglo-Saxon Antiphons for the season of Advent.²⁵ In the Advent Lyrics, ideas of unlocking, liberation, illumination and the receipt of spiritual gifts are similarly intertwined. These systems of imagery are, of course, widespread in Christian iconography and symbolic discourse, found in relation to many key moments within the mythology of salvation. Yet, both the epilogue to *Elene* and the Advent Lyrics share similar emphases and are characterised by particular attention to the role of Mary and the idea of a revelation of divine grace.

Imagery of release from imprisonment and unlocking is prominent throughout the Advent Lyrics, inspired by the typological and liturgical formula of Christ as 'clavis David' ('the key of David') who unlocks the way of life (and who also miraculously opens the womb of the Virgin).²⁶ In the series of exclamatory addresses which open each lyric, Lyric Two begins with the call:

Eala þu reccend ond þu riht cyning
se locan healdeð, lif ontyneð...

O you Ruler and you just King, who holds the keys and opens up life... (lines 18–19).²⁷

The lyric goes on to refer to the present state of mankind as prisoners, who 'in carcene / sittað sorgende, sunnan wenað' ('sit in prison sorrowing, while the sun journeys', lines 25b–26), and looks ahead to the coming moment 'hwonne us liffrea leoht ontyne' ('when the Lord of Light shines forth his light', line 27). This central metaphor of the release from captivity recurs throughout the lyrics, including in Lyric

²⁴ *Elene*, lines 1249–1251a. The compounds 'bancofan' and 'breostlocan' convey both the duality of soul and body, with the body literally imagined as a 'bone-coffer' or locker for the soul, and also the idea of the soul as precious treasure.

²⁵ See Joyce Hill, 'A Sequence of Associations in the Composition of *Christ* 275–347', *The Review of English Studies* 27 (1976), 296–99, esp. p. 296.

²⁶ Jackson J. Campbell, 'Structural Patterns in the Old English Advent Lyrics', *Journal of English Literary History* 23 (1956), 239–55, p. 247.

²⁷ All quotations from the Advent Lyrics are taken from Muir, *The Exeter Anthology*, pp. 46–65. Muir divides the poems sometimes known as *Christ I*, *II* and *III* into the *Advent Lyrics*, *The Ascension* and *Christ in Judgement*. He presents the Advent Lyrics as twelve distinct lyrics, with line numbering running continuously across them.

Three, addressed to the city of Jerusalem, which promises that Christ ‘bringeð blisse þe, benda onlyseð’ (‘brings bliss to you, unlooses your bonds’, line 68). As in Cynewulf’s epilogue, the idea of unlocking and illumination is closely inter-linked throughout the texts, although certain lyrics focus more especially on the idea of light replacing darkness. Lyric Five, meditating on the concept of Christ as ‘Oriens’ (‘Morning Star’ or Old English ‘earendel’), deals particularly with the idea of Advent as the arrival of light and dispelling of shadow (lines 104–29). Of course, throughout the Advent Lyrics, the role of Mary as Christ’s Mother is prominent and exploited in a number of symbolic ways. She is presented in Lyric Two as a humble young woman who experiences divine grace and favour when God miraculously intervenes and ‘him to meder geceas’ (‘chose her as his mother’, line 36).

The grace received by Mary is not the only spiritual gift celebrated in the Advent Lyrics: the text seems to extend this idea, together with the related imagery of light and liberation, to explore the various different kinds of illumination enabled by Christ’s incarnation. Jackson J. Campbell has suggested that the text deliberately explores the concept of ‘spiritual gifts’, suggesting that the poet foregrounds this dimension of the Advent liturgy and symbolism.

What [the poet] does seem to be developing throughout the poem is an idea connected with the light imagery, namely, man’s understanding. The request in the petition section (which comes in the middle of the poem, before the expanded section of doctrine) is that God should reveal to us His light, become a patron to our minds and spirits (*mode*). In the second section, the poet explores the effect of the historical event of the virgin birth on the words of earlier mortals, the *wita* whose old lore and prophesies were obscure and meaningless to man’s understanding until the coming of Christ. By him they were illumined (*inlihted*), or rather our perception of them was enlightened. This was accomplished, our poet insists, by the originator of life, the *Liffrea*, whose action not only brought life to the *woðsong* of the prophets but also enlightens and unlocks life for us and for our *tydre gewitt*.²⁸

Campbell’s analysis of this theme of ‘the meaning of Christ’s birth and its effect on man’s understanding’ is supported persuasively by the Old English text.²⁹ The final section of Lyric Two specifically links the idea of the spiritual gifts of knowledge and understanding to the moment of the Annunciation itself, telling us that, after this miraculous event:

Eal giofu gæstlic grundsceat geondspreot;
 þær wisna fela wearð inlihted
 lare longsume þurh lifes fruman
 þe ær under hoðman biholen lægon,
 witgena woðsong, þa se waldend cwom...

²⁸ Campbell, ‘Structural Patterns in the Old English Advent Lyrics’, p. 248.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 249.

Spiritual gifts spread out all over the realm of the earth; there many things, the lasting teaching and the eloquent song of the prophets, which had previously lain concealed under darkness, were illumined through the Creator of life, when the Ruler came... (lines 42–46).

The lyric thus associates the moment of divine revelation granted to Mary with the spiritual illumination made available to every Christian through the virgin birth and incarnation.

The ending of the main narrative of Cynewulf's *Elene* alludes to the same Advent imagery of the virgin birth and its implications, encouraging attention to the extension and development of these metaphorical possibilities in the epilogue.

...sie þara manna gehwam
 behliden helle duru, heofones ontynded,
 ece geopenad engla rice,
 dream unhwilen ȝ hira dæl scired
 mid Marian þe on gemynd nume
 þære deorestan dægweorðunga,
 rode under roderum, þa se ricesða,
 ealles oferwealdend, earme beþeahre. finit:–

May the door of hell be closed and that of heaven unlocked, and the kingdom of the angels opened eternally, may their joy be without end and their part allotted with Mary, for each of those men who holds in remembrance the most precious feast-day of the cross beneath the skies, which the most powerful, the Over-lord of all, reached over with his arms (lines 1228–36). Finit.

The subsequent, conscious incorporation of Advent imagery in the epilogue is of course appropriate in typological terms, with the Last Judgement or Second Coming, which is Cynewulf's ultimate subject of meditation, understood in terms of another, final Advent. But here, in the final lines of the main poem, Cynewulf sets out the template for his performed persona in the epilogue: he will align his own role, or part ('dæl'), with that of Mary ('mid Marian'). Whilst the imagery of the epilogue allows us to understand Cynewulf as a representative of any Christian soul, who is released from fetters and granted illumination by God, his account of his particular experience of revelation suggests the performance of an identity which parallels that of Mary, receiving her annunciation of grace. Cynewulf describes the moment of inspiration which instigates the composition of *Elene* as a moment of renewal, and the release of artistic and creative fertility. Indeed, the metaphorical terms which he selects to describe this process – whilst within the range of conventional compounds for the body in Old English poetry – foreground the idea of divine inspiration as a physical intervention, a bodily opening-up in which God 'bancofan onband, breostlocan onwand', perhaps on one level encouraging further associations with Mary's miraculous transformation into virgin mother. From Cynewulf's implied femininity as the humble weaver of the poem, to his maternity as its divinely-inspired author, the epilogue presents us with a complex, sustained – and highly Marian –

performed persona which is based on notions of humility, obedience, service and praise.³⁰ This feminised persona allows Cynewulf to construct the author as a humble handmaid, serving the poetic revelation and inspiration granted to him by God as spiritual patron. His comments on how the riddles of books and writing on the subject of the cross have been miraculously made intelligible to him situate his authorial practice within a suitably textual (and perhaps, as Lionarons argues, masculine) world, yet these too echo the concept so crucial to Advent mythology of the wider illumination and grace enabled by Mary's individual obedience.³¹

The epilogue clearly cues this set of potential associations through its reference to Mary at the end of the main narrative, and then draws allusively on a range of metaphors connected with Advent and the Annunciation (and seen, for example, in the Old English Advent Lyrics). Yet, whilst the epilogue allows Cynewulf to play with a Marian persona, it also repeatedly calls attention to the ways in which Cynewulf is different – and quite radically so – from Mary. Whilst gender difference is the obvious implicit contrast throughout, the epilogue also refers repeatedly to Cynewulf's old age (as opposed to Mary's youth) and his closeness to death and judgement (for example, line 1236, and in the elegiac formulae of the runic signature, lines 1256–79). Thus any Annunciation imagery in the epilogue is always in complex counterpoint with Cynewulf's own identity: attention is always drawn to the process of performance and the construction of or experimentation with a persona. Cynewulf's epilogue responds to his own plea to good men that 'hira dæl scired / mid Marian' ('may their part be allotted with Mary', lines 1231b–32a), allowing him to imagine and perform, in a very personal and immediate way, an intense, affective devotional experience. But the gendered role which Cynewulf adopts here, with all its associations and symbolic connotations, also allows him to articulate the role of the religious poet, in relation to his imagined patron, in subtle and multivalent ways. As a handmaid to God, the poet is both a figure of humility and service, as well as the recipient of rare and privileged grace and inspiration.

So, within Cynewulf's *Elene*, gendered personae and associations are used to shape the roles of the poem's protagonists as well as that of the poet himself and, crucially, to define shifting economies of power and agency. Indeed, Stacy Klein comments on the poem's acute attention to structures of order and hierarchy, whilst suggesting that its exploration of different roles and forms of agency 'demands that readers refuse to interpret these hierarchies as reductive prescriptions'.³² The frequent coding of Cynewulf's role in feminine terms provides a metaphorical vocabulary for articulating the position of the poet in relation to an imagined patron (Elene, God or perhaps Mary), within a complex economy of literary production figured in spiritual terms. The performance or citation of differently gendered roles identified by many scholars of *Elene*, and extended in the analysis here, is not unique to this Old English poem.

³⁰ Cynewulf's thanksgiving and praise for the revelation he has received might also recall the Marian canticle of the Magnificat, sung at Vespers next to the Advent Antiphons during this season of the liturgical year.

³¹ *Elene*, lines 1251b–56a, and see discussion of Advent Lyric Two, above.

³² Klein, 'Reading Queenship in Cynewulf's *Elene*', p. 79; see also her wider discussion of hierarchy in the poem at pp. 73–79.

Play and experimentation with differently gendered identities – and, most importantly, the implied relations between them – have been recognised and explored in other Old English vernacular texts. Mary Dockray-Miller's article on 'The Feminized Cross of "The Dream of the Rood"' focuses on 'gender performance' in the poem, discussing how the poem's 'vocabulary and imagery suggest a heterosexual rather than a homosexual relationship between two characters of a masculine Christ and a feminine cross' and arguing that 'the gendering of the cross as feminine during the crucifixion scene serves to highlight a heterosexual masculinity of Christ'.³³ With broader implications for the analysis in this chapter, Emma B. Hawkins' study of the same poem observes that 'gender-coded traits constituted a fluid system of classification that indicated who was able or permitted to exercise power', concluding that the poet of *The Dream of the Rood* was able to draw upon 'gender-coded language to trace the ebb and flow of power among poetical figures'.³⁴ With more specific reference to representations of the relationship between poet and patron, it could be suggested that the authorial persona of the Exeter Book poem *Deor* explores variously gendered subject positions in order to express his misery and loss of status as a once-cherished *scop* to his lord.³⁵ However, many of the analyses of these texts tend to work from the assumption that, whilst both positions are available to both male and female protagonists, power must always be textually coded as masculine, whilst powerlessness or relative submission is coded as feminine.³⁶ The later Anglo-Saxon texts which will form the focus of the second part of this chapter demonstrate that this is not invariably the case, perhaps as new ideologies and discourses of female power and patronage emerge from the late tenth century onwards.

In the context of the current discussion, with its attention to the use of performance and gendered imagery to articulate the hierarchies and varieties of agency involved in literary production, we might also usefully recall the influential work by Clare Lees and Gillian Overing on Bede, Hild and Cædmon and the 'relations of cultural production'. Lees and Overing are careful to point out the distinctions and 'tensions' between 'metaphorized' and 'ideological discourse' as opposed to 'historicized instance' (also articulated as the difference between 'representation' and 'referentiality'): their analysis explores both the historical role of 'real' women in cultural production as well as the symbolic uses of the feminine in texts.³⁷ Their interpretation of the story of Cædmon, as narrated by Bede in the

³³ Mary Dockray-Miller, 'The Feminized Cross of "The Dream of the Rood"', *Philological Quarterly* 76 (1997), 1–18, p. 7.

³⁴ Emma B. Hawkins, 'Gender, Language, and Power in "The Dream of the Rood"', *Women and Language* 18 (1995), 33–36, pp. 35 and 33.

³⁵ Jane Chance explores questions of gender and authorial personae in a range of Old English 'elegiac' poems (*Deor*, *Wulf and Eadwacer* and *The Wife's Lament*) in *Woman as Hero*, pp. 81–90. However, she contrasts the 'masculine' identity of *Deor* with the female personae adopted in the other two texts.

³⁶ See for example Hawkins, 'Gender, Language and Power', p. 35.

³⁷ Clare A. Lees and Gillian R. Overing, *Double Agents: Women and Clerical Culture in Anglo-Saxon England* (Philadelphia, 2001), pp. 9–10. The first chapter of this monograph, 'Patristic Maternity: Bede, Hild and Cultural Procreation' is a revised version of the jointly-authored article 'Birthing

Historia Ecclesiastica, examines the ways in which Hild is marginalised from the story, but also her own complicity in patriarchal systems of power and (re-)production. Whilst Lees and Overing explore the historicity of Bede's account, they also open up questions about patriarchy, gender asymmetry and the kinds of creative agency or authority which medieval texts can conventionally attach to male or female gendered roles. They suggest that '[t]he gender asymmetry suggested by the events of Hild's *Life* and Cædmon's miracle is a familiar binarism of patriarchy: women reproduce, men produce'. Lees and Overing's analysis is valuable here as it calls attention to the ways in which, again, gendered roles and identities can bring with them particular sets of associations or conventional hierarchical configurations in terms of creative or cultural agency. Again, however, the late Anglo-Saxon sources which will be discussed in the second part of this chapter suggest that, by the late tenth century, different rhetorical tropes and ideologies were becoming available, which allowed a subtle re-shaping of the symbolic possibilities attached to male and female roles (and forms of agency) as represented in literary texts.

In late Anglo-Saxon texts produced for female patrons, the gender roles performed by authors and patrons are generally less fluid and more fixed, usually (but, significantly, not always) following the 'real' gender identities of the historical figures involved. The *Encomium Emmae Reginae* and *Vita Edwardi* make self-conscious use of the symbolic and associative possibilities of the pairings and inter-relations between the gendered roles of author and patron, calling attention to questions of hierarchy, power, authority and service. Whilst *Elene* imagined its own origins through a combination of individual creativity, the use of (newly-illuminated) textual authority, and – crucially – divine inspiration or spiritual patronage, the texts to be discussed now understand textual production in terms of collaboration between authors and 'real' historical patrons – although those patrons can be imagined and represented through a range of religious, historical and mythical models. Currently, much exciting new work on gender and literary production in late Anglo-Saxon and early post-Conquest England is generating new interest in questions of female patronage and collaborative processes of authorship.³⁸ The primary aim of the present discussion is not to contribute to the recovery of the historical circumstances or realities of women's literary patronage in late Anglo-Saxon England, though recent scholarship on these topics will of course provide an important context for understanding the texts examined here. Instead, this chapter seeks to complement the current research on female patronage in the tenth and eleventh centuries with a more

Bishops and Fathering Poets: Hild, Bede and the Relations of Cultural Production', *Exemplaria* 6 (1994), 35–65.

³⁸ Important studies include Pauline Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith* and many of the articles collected in *Gender, Family and the Legitimation of Power*; the work of Stephanie Hollis, including *Writing the Wilton Women: Goscelin's Legend of Edith and Liber Confortatorius*, ed. Hollis et al. (Turnhout, 2004); the general theoretical discussion of women's role in literary production in the Introduction to Diane Watt, *Medieval Women's Writing: Works by and for Women in England, 1100–1500* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 1–18; and a large body of work by Elizabeth Tyler, including her forthcoming monograph *England in Europe: Women, Multilingualism and Patronage in the Eleventh Century*.

sustained investigation of how gender can be used as a symbolic discourse in texts of this period. Once again, the key focus will be on how the textual performance of gendered roles and personae can be used by authors and patrons to figure their roles within the hierarchies and economies of literary production.

The *Encomium Emmae Reginae* is a text characterised by performance, citation and allusion. Through presentation of carefully-defined personae, it establishes an apparently clear hierarchy between encomiast and patron, with Emma placed in a position of superiority, power and authority. The patron's power is figured in the text through her association with a range of different roles and identities. Indeed, both encomiast and patron perform a range of different personae within the *Encomium* in order to articulate their place within a complex economy of agency and production. This discussion focuses on the text of the *Encomium* in the eleventh-century manuscript British Library Additional 3241. Until recently, this was the only medieval manuscript of the text known to exist (although there was also evidence for the existence of another eleventh-century manuscript, with a variant ending which placed greater emphasis on Emma's son, Edward).³⁹ However, a newly-discovered manuscript in the archives of the earl of Devon has presented a full alternative version of the *Encomium*, in a recension produced for King Edward the Confessor.⁴⁰ The content and motivation of this text are inevitably different from that originally written for Emma, referring to Harthacnut's death, praising Edward as 'uir uirum eminentia conspicuus uirtute animi consiliiue atque etiam ingenii uiuacitate peditus' ('a man notable for the prominence of his strength, endowed with power of mind and purpose and also with enduring character'), and displacing Emma from the centre of the text to conclude at the end that 'Explicit Tractatus de Gestis Regis Chnutonis' ('Here ends the account of the deeds of King Cnut').⁴¹ A full comparative reading between the two texts of the *Encomium* would reveal much about changing patronage, representations of power and the re-writing of texts in the eleventh century. This discussion, however, examines the earlier version of the *Encomium* produced for Queen Emma, probably one of the best-known works instigated by a woman in this period.

Queen Emma, the daughter of a noble family in Normandy, became the second wife of the Anglo-Saxon king Æthelræd (1002–16) and after his death married the Danish king of England Cnut (1017–35). Traditionally, scholarship has attributed authorship of the *Encomium* to a monk of Saint-Bertin in Flanders, suggesting that the text was then brought to England for presentation to Emma.⁴² Yet more recent studies have explored the possibility that the *Encomium* was produced in England from within the court of Harthacnut, Emma's son by Cnut, allowing the anonymous encomiast much more immediate engagement with its culture and politics, and with

³⁹ *EER*, p. xlix.

⁴⁰ See Timothy Bolton, 'A newly emergent mediaeval manuscript containing *Encomium Emmae reginae* with the only known complete text of the recension prepared for King Edward the Confessor', *Mediaeval Studies* 19 (2009), 205–21.

⁴¹ Bolton, 'A newly emergent mediaeval manuscript', p. 219.

⁴² *EER*, pp. xxxix–xli.

the aims and intentions of Emma herself.⁴³ Though the exact political purpose of the text remains unclear and subject to debate, the *Encomium* evidently presents an account of recent history which promotes Emma's interests (and those of her son, Harthacnut), justifying her actions, eliding problematic aspects of her career (such as her first marriage to King Æthelræd), and seeking to establish her legitimacy and power in the role of queen-mother.⁴⁴ The *Encomium* reflects Emma's role as a powerful figure at the centre of a multi-lingual court which brought together different (and sometimes competing) traditions, cultural communities and political factions. The choice of Latin as the literary language for the *Encomium* enables the text to cross the linguistic and cultural divides of the Anglo-Danish court,⁴⁵ but also enables the prestige and authority of classical rhetorical and mythological models to be gathered into Emma's version of recent history and her role within it. The career of Emma's mother, Gunnor, as a patron of Latin poets, may have served as a model for Emma's patronage of the encomiast.⁴⁶ Certainly, Emma can be identified as one of the first women to commission and support the production of secular (rather than religious or devotional) text in this period. Her instigation of the *Encomium* might be compared, in some ways, with the politically-astute literary patronage of Adela of Blois, daughter of William the Conqueror, whose 'support of panegyric' from the 1080s onwards is framed by Gerald Bond in terms of the self-conscious production and dissemination of advantageous personae. He comments that Adela

...perceived clearly ... that she would do well to authorize her own fame, exercising symbolic power to her own advantage through a sort of reverse impersonation.⁴⁷

The terms of Bond's representation of Adela might equally form a useful framework for interpreting the textual strategies and performances involved in the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*.

Emma emerges from the early medieval sources as a complex, multi-faceted figure: different representations of her as queen and patron survive, reflecting the different roles she performed in different contexts. Pauline Stafford compares two surviving contemporary images of Emma which manipulate these different aspects of her identity, relative to those around her: the frontispiece to the *Liber Vitae* of the New Minster, Winchester (London, BL MS Stowe 944, fol. 6r) and the frontispiece to the *Encomium Emmae Reginae* itself (London, BL MS Addit. 33241, fol. 1v). The Winchester *Liber Vitae* shows Emma and Cnut jointly giving a gift (a large gold

⁴³ Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith*, pp. 28–40; *EER*, pp. xxxv–vi, lxix; Andy Orchard, 'The Literary Background to the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*', *Journal of Medieval Latin* 11 (2001), 156–83.

⁴⁴ For different perspectives, see for example M.W. Campbell, 'The *Encomium Emmae Reginae*: Personal Panegyric or Political Propaganda?', *Annuaire Mediaevale* 19 (1979), 27–45; Felice Lifshitz, 'The *Encomium Emmae Reginae*: A "Political Pamphlet" of the Eleventh Century?', *Haskins Society Journal* 1 (1989), 39–50.

⁴⁵ Elizabeth M. Tyler, 'Talking about history in eleventh-century England: the *Encomium Emmae Reginae* and the court of Harthacnut', *Early Medieval Europe* 13 (2005), 359–83, esp. pp. 368–70.

⁴⁶ Tyler, 'Talking about history', p. 376.

⁴⁷ Bond, *The Loving Subject*, p. 156.

cross) to the New Minster, with Cnut actively lifting the cross onto the altar from the right, while Emma stands at the left. Stafford suggests that the image might be read as one which depicts Cnut as patron and figure of power, while Emma, as his wife, is confined to a 'secondary and contingent' position. But she also argues that the picture might be interpreted differently, showing Emma in a role of significant power and authority herself.

She may not grasp the cross, but she is clearly involved in the gift, gesturing actively towards it; she is as large and prominent as her husband in the picture, and size is significant in an early eleventh-century image.⁴⁸

In the frontispiece to the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, Emma's role is depicted far more unequivocally as one of power and authority. Emma is shown enthroned, central and dominant in the image, while her sons kneel at the side, 'marginal, secondary, subservient'.⁴⁹ Here Emma is represented as queen and mother, mirroring, as Stafford notes, the 'verbal portrait' of Emma with her sons at the end of the *Encomium*, where they are represented as united 'regni sotiis' ('sharers of rule').⁵⁰ For Stafford, these different images of Emma prompt a series of questions about her identity.

Is she a wife, mother or queen (*regina*)? How do these three affect each other? How do any of them bring power or authority? And why do these images suggest not only power, but ambiguity and limitation?⁵¹

Similarly, throughout the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, Emma is aligned with a range of different roles and personae, generating potential questions, tensions and ambiguities.

Throughout the *Encomium*, Emma's power as queen and patron is figured through her carefully textually-constructed performance of different roles. Beyond the specific issue of her relationship to the *Encomium* (and its author) as patron, the text exploits a range of personae, drawn primarily from classical and biblical mythology, in order to imagine and articulate different facets of her power and career. Many of these different roles are ambivalent, or sit uneasily alongside each other, and many complicate or transgress the conventionally-accepted bounds of feminine identity and female agency in the period. Indeed, the encomiast imagines

⁴⁸ Pauline Stafford, 'Emma: the powers of the queen in the eleventh century', collected in her *Gender, Family and the Legitimation of Power: England from the Ninth to the Early Twelfth Century* (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 3–26, p. 4. This representation of Emma is also discussed by Catherine Karkov, *The Ruler Portraits*, pp. 121–33.

⁴⁹ Stafford, 'Emma: the powers of the queen', p. 5. Catherine Karkov describes the sons as seemingly 'an awkward addition' but does suggest that the composition of the image recalls traditional elements from early medieval depictions of the adoration of the Magi – again, emphasising Emma's central authority and dignity in the scene. See Karkov, *The Ruler Portraits*, p. 153.

⁵⁰ *EER*, pp. 52–53. However, as many scholars have suggested, this overt image of a united, loyal ruling 'Trinity' may invite questions about implicit tensions and conflicts between them.

⁵¹ Stafford, 'The powers of the queen', p. 6. Karkov also argues that this portrait 'captures in a single image the idea that Emma could be both a famous queen and a virgin mother'. Karkov, *The Ruler Portraits*, p. 152.

Emma's performance of a variety of roles with a range of gendered implications or connotations, expanding the spheres of agency and authority allowed to her as a woman, but also generating possible anxieties about the form and extent of her power as queen. Andy Orchard has discussed how the encomiast uses phrases from the apocryphal book of Judith which 'strongly suggest an equally approving attitude to the biblical widow and her royal counterpart', while the text's account of Emma's return to England draws on a substantial passage from Lucan, aligning this event with 'the homecoming of the much-loved Cornelia, wife of Pompey'.⁵² Even these, female, personae are notably multi-dimensional and complex, with the war-like royal widow Judith suggesting Emma's active political role (but also the potential dangers or suspicions linked to the figure of the virago) and the character of Cornelia inviting associations of feminine loyalty and virtue in the midst of historical turmoil and division. Other feminine roles which the encomiast associates with Emma are similarly complex and ambivalent. In his discussion, in the Prologue, of the challenges of writing history, the encomiast observes that 'profecto unius tantum comperta admixtione mendatii auditor facta uelut infecta ducit' ('the hearer assuredly regards facts as fictions, when he has ascertained the introduction of so much as one lie').⁵³ As Elizabeth Tyler has noted, the phrase 'facta uelut infecta' derives from the *Aeneid* Book IV, where Fama spreads the news that Dido and Aeneas have slept together in a cave during a storm.⁵⁴ This implicit association here, as well as in the encomiast's other discussions of fame, rumour and the figure of Fama, links Emma with Dido, the famously powerful queen who finds herself at the mercy of the talk and opinions of others.⁵⁵ Tyler has discussed in more detail the encomiast's use of Virgil and the *Aeneid* in particular, commenting that the 'most active women' and models of female agency in the classical text, Dido and Camilla, 'both behave as men', whether in the court or on the battlefield.⁵⁶ Tyler's reading calls attention to tensions and ambivalences within the *Encomium* and its association of Emma with figures such as Dido, arguing that, whilst they may initially appear to serve as models of female agency, the strong female characters in the *Aeneid* are increasingly used in emergent medieval romance tradition as cautionary models 'to control the behaviour of aristocratic women'.⁵⁷ This discussion will return to the complex question of the limits and constraints of Emma's queenly power and patronage, as represented in the *Encomium*.

In addition to the female roles of Judith, Cornelia and Dido which Emma can be seen to perform within the *Encomium*, the text also shapes for her a series of masculine personae to express aspects of her power and authority. These variously gendered roles allow the encomiast to represent different kinds of agency and to go beyond the limiting rhetorical conventions which circumscribe female power in early

⁵² Orchard, 'The literary background to the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*', pp. 158–59.

⁵³ *EER*, pp. 4–5.

⁵⁴ Elizabeth M. Tyler, 'Fictions of Family: The *Encomium Emmae Reginae* and Virgil's *Aeneid*', *Viator* 36 (2005), 149–79, p. 168.

⁵⁵ See Tyler, 'Talking about history', p. 364.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 379–80.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 380.

medieval texts. At the very end of the text (in British Library MS, Additional 33241, the version written for Emma), as already mentioned, Emma is represented as part of an idealised ruling triumvirate together with her sons.

...mater amboque filii regni paratis commodis nulla lite intercedente utuntur. Hic fides habetur regni sotiis, hic inuiolabile uiget faedus materni fraternique amoris. Haec illis omnia prestat, qui unanimes in domo habiater facit, Iesus Christus, Dominus omnium, cui in Trinitate manenti inmarcessibile floret imperium, Amen.

...the mother and both sons, having no disagreement between them, enjoy the ready amenities of the kingdom. Here there *is* loyalty among sharers of rule, here the bond of motherly and brotherly love is of strength indestructible. All these things were granted them by Him, who makes dwellers in a house be of one mind, Jesus Christ, the Lord of all, who, abiding in the Trinity, holds a kingdom which flourishes unfading. Amen.⁵⁸

Here the parallel with the heavenly kingdom figures Emma and her sons as a mirror-image of the Trinity, with this version implicitly adapted to include the figure of the holy Mother. But Emma's role is also clearly masculinised here: the italics in Campbell's edition emphasise the contrast drawn by the encomiast between government in England and that of ancient Rome, as described by Lucan in the *Pharsalia*.⁵⁹ The deliberate linguistic echo of the *Pharsalia* recalls the Roman ruling triumvirate of Caesar, Crassus and Pompey, casting Emma in terms of a powerful male leader and politician. The ultimate failure of the Roman triumvirate remains hanging in the final lines, as a possible reminder of the fragility of any such political pacts and compromises.

Most strikingly, in the opening Prologue and Argument, where the encomiast seeks to establish his project in writing the *Encomium*, as well as the relation of Emma, as patron, to his text, several tropes suggest her association with masculine models. First, the encomiast compares Emma's excellence to the brightness of the sun itself.

Quod enim cuiuslibet peritiae loquentis de te uirtus tua preminet, omnibus a quibus cognosceris ipso solis iubare clarius lucet.

That your excellence transcends the skill of any one speaking about you is apparent to all to whom you are known, more clearly than the very radiance of the sun.⁶⁰

In late antique and early medieval panegyric, the image of the sun is conventionally associated with the power of the (male) ruler,⁶¹ evoking here a sense of Emma's sole authority and power in her own right (rather than merely in relation to a husband,

⁵⁸ EER, pp. 52–53.

⁵⁹ See Orchard, 'The literary background to the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*', p. 166.

⁶⁰ EER, pp. 4–5.

⁶¹ See MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity*, pp. 17 and 282, n. 21, and the discussion in this volume, Chapter 3, p. 102.

father or son). Even more emphatically, in the Argument, the encomiast explains his intention to place the praise of Emma at the centre of his work, comparing his technique with that of Virgil's *Aeneid*.

Aeneida conscriptam a Uirgilo quis poterit infitriari ubique laudibus respondere Octouiani, cum pene nihil aut plane parum eius mentio uideatur nominatim interseri? Animaduerte igitur laudem suo generi ascriptam ipsius decori claritudinis claritatisque in omnibus nobilitare gloriam. Quis autem hoc neget, laudibus reginae hunc per omnia respondere codicem, cum non modo ad eius gloriam scribatur, uerum etiam eius maximam uideatur optinere partem?

Who can deny that the *Aeneid*, written by Virgil, is everywhere devoted to the praise of Octavian, although practically no mention of him by name, or clearly very little, is seen to be introduced? Note, therefore, that the praise accorded to his family everywhere celebrates the glory of their fame and renown to his own honour. Who can deny that this book is entirely devoted to the praise of the Queen, since it is not only written to her glory, but since that subject occupies the greatest part of it?⁶²

The encomiast's analogy places Emma specifically in relation to the text of which she is patron: she is his Octavian, while he claims the role of a new Virgil. The equivalence drawn between Emma and Octavian makes a radical statement, with Emma here appropriating the persona of a famed male Roman political and military leader. As Elizabeth Tyler comments, this analogy is problematic as well as bold: '[i]t is striking that it is Emma, rather than Harthacnut, the current ruler of the Anglo-Danish Empire, that is figured as Octavian'.⁶³ By framing his discussion in relation to his own work and Emma's relationship to it, the encomiast is able to accord her this role of ultimate power and authority, displacing and eliding any co-existent or competing (male) figures within the contemporary political setting. As Octavian, Emma commands all the fame and glory generated by her text.

These 'framing' sections of the *Encomium* present a careful textual performance of the roles of patron and author in relation to the production of the work itself. From the start, the text establishes a clear hierarchy between patron and author, with relational gendered roles used to articulate and reinforce this structure. But there are also recurrent suggestions of the complex economies and negotiations transacted between patron and author as the commission is realised, and the identities of Emma and the encomiast emerge as acutely inter-dependent in a range of crucial ways. Whilst Emma is figured in the Argument as Octavian – a startling choice of masculine persona for the text's female patron – the opening sections of the *Encomium* focus more often on her femininity and the particular rhetoric of power and service which this suggests. Of all Emma's roles, the most important is signalled at the very start of the text, where she is addressed as 'o regina' ('O Queen'), 'que omnibus in hoc sexu positis prestos morum eligantia' ('who excel all those of your sex

⁶² *EER*, pp. 6–7.

⁶³ Tyler, 'Talking about history', p. 381.

in the admirability of your way of life').⁶⁴ In the first sentence, then, Emma's status as queen and her femininity are signalled as the most significant aspects of her identity. The encomiast goes on to imagine himself and Emma in the roles of 'seruus' ('servant') and 'digna' ('noble lady'), with the text striving to serve (however unworthily) the praise and glory of its patron. The representation of Emma as a peerless queen who excels all others of her sex in virtue inevitably, and deliberately, calls up associations with the Virgin Mary as Queen of Heaven, an important model for idealised femininity and queenship in the eleventh century.⁶⁵ Emma performs versions of the role of Mary within the text in a number of ways, as queen, mother and dutiful wife, and the Prologue uses the Marian analogy to construct the *Encomium* as a work of devotion and humble worship. The encomiast is cast, implicitly, in the role of humble supplicant, adorer and servant to his idealised patron.

Yet the Prologue's attention to Emma's femininity also enables another set of associations, and their implications in terms of configurations of power and agency, to emerge through the text. The language of the Prologue is characterised by tropes and rhetorical formulae which convey intense affective experience and desire. The encomiast begins by declaring that:

Ego seruus tuus nobilitati tuae digna factis meis exhibere nequeo, quoque pacto uerbis saltem illi placere possim nescio

I, your servant, am unable to show you, noble lady, anything worthy in my deeds, and I do not know how I can be acceptable to you even in words.⁶⁶

He professes that:

Te igitur erga me adeo bene meritam magnifacio, ut morti intrepidus occumberem, si in rem tibi prouenire crederem.

You, then, I esteem as one who has deserved of me to such a degree, that I would sink to death unafraid, if I believed that my action would lead to your advantage.⁶⁷

The intense, hyperbolic language here presents the encomiast's relationship to Emma in terms of a conflation of service and desire, exploiting their gendered identities, masculine and feminine, to articulate the dynamics of the text's patronage and production. Repeatedly, the text emphasises the encomiast's project as one motivated by desire and love as much as by command: for example, in a neat instance of word-play, the encomiast confides that he 'longs' ('gestio') to produce a record of Emma's deeds ('gestarum') for posterity. The eagerness and desire suggested by *gestio*, together with the text's insistent references to submission and dedication – with death as an

⁶⁴ *EER*, pp. 4–5.

⁶⁵ See Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith*, pp. 56, 97, 159; Mary Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 2003).

⁶⁶ *EER*, pp. 4–5.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

acceptable fate in honour of the lady – combine to form an unmistakable picture of courtly service. Usually dated to the early 1040s, it would be anachronistic to align the *Encomium Emmae Reginae* with the fully-developed culture and rhetoric of courtliness or *fin amor* as recognised by modern scholars from the twelfth century onwards.⁶⁸ Yet the positions of servant and lady performed in the text here do resonate with an emerging discourse of secular service and desire even in the later eleventh century. Gerald Bond has traced a distinctive emphasis on secular love and devotion in France and England from at least the 1060s, with examples including the collection of lyrics known as ‘The Cambridge Songs’, copied in England sometime after 1060.⁶⁹ Bond associates the emergence of this new ‘loving subject’ with the culture of clerks associated with courts in England and France, as well as, by the end of the eleventh century, with Benedictine monastic culture.⁷⁰ Hints of this developing discourse and ideology are clearly evident in the Prologue to the *Encomium*, and Bond’s concept of ‘dominism’, understood as ‘a nexus of ritual praise, feminine image, and ideology’ which incorporates ‘the various cults of the lady as being of superior goodness and beauty’ can inform our reading.⁷¹ Bond argues that, in texts of the late eleventh century onwards, ‘as the praise of ladies for secular qualities beyond those of wife and mother changed and expanded its scope, we can examine the moment when authors and patrons (or “matrons”) first wove together separate cultural strands to reform the secular subject of desire’.⁷² He notes continuities with previous (particularly religious) ideologies of service and devotion, commenting that, for example, ‘[e]xisting notions of the martyrdom of desire and service to ladies could be fused and reformed within an institutional and programmatic context structured by the Benedictine Rule which preached in its prologue a gradual purification of the soul through humility and service’.⁷³

Clearly, it would be a mistake to read the Prologue of the *Encomium Emmae Reginae* as a fully-fledged example of the cult of love, service and devotion to the lady which reaches its mature expression in twelfth-century literature and culture. Indeed, it is telling that the encomiast still needs to appropriate masculine images of fame and glory (such as the metaphor of the shining sun, or the classical model of Octavian) in order to fully imagine and articulate the power of his female patron. Yet the roles performed in the text by the encomiast (as the desiring, eager ‘seruus’) and Emma (as ‘digna’) do suggest that new personae were becoming available to authors and patrons in the mid-eleventh century, and that discourses were emerging which might enable

⁶⁸ For the dating of the *Encomium*, see Simon Keynes, ‘Introduction to the 1998 Reprint’, in *EER*, pp. xiii–ixxx, pp. xxxix–xli. For the classic study on the medieval ideology of courtliness and courtly love, see C.S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (Oxford, 1936), or, for more recent perspectives, see James A. Schultz, *Courtly Love, the Love of Courtliness and the History of Sexuality* (Chicago, 2006) and *Courtly Arts and the Art of Courtliness: Selected Papers from the Eleventh Triennial Congress of the International Courtly Literature Society*, ed. Keith Busby and Christopher Kleinhenz (Cambridge, 2006).

⁶⁹ Bond, *The Loving Subject*, pp. 67–68, p. 35.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 38, 70.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

power (including the power to inspire and command secular creative activity) to be figured as distinctively feminine. Claims of unworthiness and unacceptability are, of course, a conventional part of this discourse. The encomiast's professions that 'pacto uerbis saltem illi placere possim nescio' ('I do not know how I can be acceptable to you even in words'), or that Emma's excellence is beyond his skill with language, are typical of literary addresses to powerful patrons, male or female, but also prefigure more specifically the formal language of courtesy and love associated with twelfth-century courtly literature. Elizabeth Tyler has argued, however, that these claims in the Prologue to the *Encomium* are more than conventional tropes, but rather indicate the encomiast's real doubts about his ability to complete his project and serve Emma's political interests whilst also being accepted by a wider audience.⁷⁴ Tyler's reading calls attention to the complex negotiations being transacted in the text here: the exchanges and obligations shared by patron and author, the bartering of truth and fiction which enables the production of an 'acceptable' work, and the subtle economy of complicity and participation established between text and audience, whose role is to engage and collaborate with the particular version of history being shaped by the encomiast here.

In her discussion of Emma in 'Emma: the powers of the queen in the eleventh century', Pauline Stafford writes that she does not 'wish to reduce her to a collection of roles'.⁷⁵ Yet, through the *Encomium* and especially the framing sections of the text which have been the focus of analysis here, Emma does emerge through a series of different, often contrasting or contradictory, personae. The disparate roles which she performs resist reconciliation or homogenisation, instead articulating diverse aspects of her identity as queen and literary patron. On further reflection, fundamental questions arise regarding concepts of performance and the adoption of personae in the *Encomium*. Whose performances are we witnessing here? Who produces the personae constructed within the text, and where should we locate its agency? Whilst the *Encomium* ostensibly supports a hierarchy with Emma as the most powerful figure and ultimate agent of the text's production, she in fact exists textually only as the encomiast's construction. As a series of personae or roles produced in order to illustrate specific points in the text's argument, Emma is invented by her author and is performed by him through his text. Stafford's impulse to close down and resolve the differences and contradictions she sees between different portraits of Emma reflects the historian's imperative to look beyond representation towards referentiality and historical 'reality'. Yet the 'collection of roles' which she identifies in contemporary depictions of Emma is characteristic of the exploration of performance and personae which Gerald Bond suggests is typical of late eleventh- and twelfth-century culture.

Bond describes how 'each individual must build up a complex repertory of self-representations', developing his notion of the 'polymorphic subject' to articulate this

⁷⁴ Tyler, 'Fictions of Family', p. 159.

⁷⁵ Stafford, 'Emma: the powers of the queen', p. 21. She comments that 'A woman like Emma played roles written for her by tradition, and the representations of those traditions often mask the essentially contested nature of the power and authority they possess.'

complex process of self-fashioning.⁷⁶ Yet Bond extends this concept, particularly in the context of female patronage, to include the possibilities of 'reverse impersonation', when an author is commissioned to produce a text which shapes and performs the identity of his patron. He coins the term 'bespoken' to convey the complex position of these female patrons – who both command the production of 'bespoke' literary work, yet surrender their own voice and self-representation to their authors – and the complex economies of agency generated by their patronage.⁷⁷ Bond suggests that

...it seems to me that all bespoke work is perforce duplicit in the sense that it results from the interaction and interference of two intentions, that each 'intender' has ulterior designs at least partially irrelevant and / or incomprehensible to the other, and that the product largely masks the process for ideological reasons.⁷⁸

The *Encomium Emmae Reginae* is unusual in that it does *not* mask these difficult processes and negotiations between patron and author: the Prologue and Argument call acute attention to the challenges of comprehending and fulfilling Emma's commission. Indeed, the *Encomium* seems to be far more complex than a 'duplicit' text, a term which suggests the existence of merely two motives and messages attached, respectively, to the author and patron (and which in many ways subverts Bond's own notion of the 'polymorphic subject'). Instead, the experimentation with roles and personae in the *Encomium* breaks open any sense of the text as 'dual', frustrating any attempt to unpick or assign intentions to either Emma or the encomiast, and calling attention to the fraught collaboration of author and patron in the making of both the text and its repertoire of identities. Yet Bond's theorisation sharpens our understanding of the complexities of performance and the construction of the personae of author and patron in the *Encomium*. In the mid eleventh century, the text is able to draw on emergent models and discourses which present a paradigm of female power and patronage relative to male devotion and service. Yet the power and authority of Emma as female patron is to an extent illusory, the result of her author's carefully-constructed textual performances and of her restricted role as the 'bespoken' noble lady.

⁷⁶ Bond, *The Loving Subject*, pp. 12, 67–68. Bond also suggests that classical theories of *persona* may well have been known to medieval writers in this period. Bond's theory moves away from the binary which has traditionally been implicated in discussions of self-identification and self-representation, often predicated on an assumed distinction between an essential, authentic self and a conscious projection. For example, Richard Lanham has discussed how an investigation of rhetoric enables recognition of how 'duple – if not duplicitous – man comes to seem... At least half the time his living is play, his motive dramatic and self-contrived, his self a role. It is to sustain this second man and second reality that rhetoric exists'. See Richard Lanham, *The Motives of Eloquence* (New Haven, 1976), p. 210. Whilst the concepts of 'play' and 'roles' here are useful, the terms of Gerald Bond's analysis open up the possibility of a range of inter-related personae and selves, without privileging a notional prior or authentic identity.

⁷⁷ See for example Bond, *The Loving Subject*, pp. 144–45 and 157.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

Like the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, the *Vita Ædwardi Regis* is also a text with a recurrent interest in broad issues of performance, display and the management of identities. This emphasis is reflected in the text's own self-conscious use of performative strategies and the construction of different personae, extending into the representation of relationships between the author (usually referred to as the Anonymous), and the text's patron. The *Vita Ædwardi* makes subtle use of the connotations and associations of gendered roles and identities in order to figure the place of author and patron within the complex hierarchies and economies of literary production. Just a few years later than the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, with its composition spanning the Norman Conquest itself (1065–67),⁷⁹ the *Vita Ædwardi*, written for the wife and widow of King Edward the Confessor, Edith, similarly negotiates a context of political upheaval and uncertainty. Again, probably written by a monk from the Flemish monastery of Saint-Bertin, the *Vita Ædwardi* both commemorates the life of an Anglo-Saxon king and also, crucially, works to shape a new role and new legitimacy for Edith at this difficult time of transition in which her status has changed so radically.⁸⁰ The *Vita* again reflects the complexity of writing history and serving the needs of a patron, with the text's own form suggesting the difficulties of producing a single, coherent (and favourable) perspective on Edward's reign and Edith's role. Its prosimetrical structure, with alternating sections in verse and prose, allows the author to explore different idioms and discourses, together with the variety of (often conflicting) interpretations which they generate.⁸¹

The text's attention to issues of performance in general shows an acute awareness of the ways in which identities are fashioned and maintained through the use of recognisable cultural signifiers and markers. The public ceremonial of the royal gift-giving following Edward's coronation is described in detail by the Anonymous,⁸² and the text places particular emphasis on Edith's role in shaping Edward's regal persona. In a passage from Book I, Chapter 2 (recovered by Barlow from Richard of Cirencester), the *Vita* praises Edith's care in furnishing the king with the garments and finery appropriate to his station. The text comments on the embroidered robes which Edith provides, as well as the gold-adorned throne, jewel-encrusted staff, precious saddle and horse-trappings and other items which signify Edward's kingly power.⁸³ Later in the *Vita*, the Anonymous comments again on the finery worn by Edward, whilst noting the king's lack of vanity or pride in these worldly trappings.

Ipsa quoque regalium ornamentorum pompa qua ex officio regie uxoris sue ambiebatur, tacite et temporaliter, utique satis expresse dictum sit, nulla animi delectation utebatur...

⁷⁹ *Vita Ædwardi*, pp. xxix–xxxiii.

⁸⁰ Monika Otter, 'Closed Doors: An Epithalamium for Queen Edith, Widow and Virgin', in *Constructions of Widowhood and Virginity in the Middle Ages*, ed. Cindy L. Carlson and Angela Jane Weisl (Basingstoke, 1999), pp. 63–94, esp. p. 64; Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith*, pp. 40–50.

⁸¹ See the more detailed discussion of prosimetrical writing in Chapter 5 of this study.

⁸² *Vita Ædwardi*, pp. 17–19.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 23–25.

Moreover, it was quietly, and only for the occasion – in any case, it should be distinctly said, with no mental pleasure – that he displayed the pomp of royal finery in which the queen obligingly arrayed him.⁸⁴

Whilst Edward's lack of concern for worldly wealth is a marker of his saintliness, the text is approving of Edith's provision of the regalia of kingship, and its important role in fashioning the public image and authority of the monarch.⁸⁵ The Anonymous clearly recognises that kingship is a persona which must be cultivated and sustained through public performance and display. The performance of different roles and adoption of diverse personae can also be seen across a range of key figures within the text. Victoria Jordan's study of the prosimetrical form of the *Vita* has explored how Edward himself is presented in the personae of both earthly king and saint, with the verse and prose elements of the work serving as appropriate idioms or vehicles for carrying each of these different facets of his character.⁸⁶ Edith performs a range of different roles within the text, from the Marian figure celebrated in the epithalamium on the occasion of the building of the new church at Wilton (which emphasises the queen's spiritual progeny in contrast to her lack of physical offspring),⁸⁷ to the deeply maternal figure who 'enutrierit, docuerit, ornauerit et omnem maternum affectum in eis effuderit' ('reared, educated, adorned and showered with motherly love') the boys of royal blood associated with the court, and even 'mater pia' ('good mother') to Edward himself.⁸⁸ Monika Otter has discussed the potential problems and ambivalences at such moments within the text: Edith's childlessness, which is avoided in any direct narrative, becomes an insistent under-current throughout the work, emerging in repeated imagery of progeny, mothering and reproduction.⁸⁹ In a still more counter-intuitive analogy, the text even figures Edith as Edward's 'child', with the Anonymous's Muse asking

Num meminis quod eum patrem tibi sepe loquendo
Nuncupet, et natam quam pie se referat?

Do you forget that often when you talked
She called him father and herself his child?⁹⁰

Located in the troubled opening verses of Book II, following the account of the death of Edward and now confronting the horrors of civil (and family) conflict and the deaths in battle of Earl Tostig, Harald Hardrada, Harold Godwineson and others, this re-imagining of Edith as Edward's child represents a self-conscious reformulation

⁸⁴ *Vita Ædwardi*, pp. 62–65.

⁸⁵ For a detailed discussion of these passages, see Tyler, 'When Wings Incarnadine', pp. 86–90 and 99–106.

⁸⁶ Victoria B. Jordan, 'Chronology and Discourse in the *Vita Ædwardi Regis*', *Journal of Medieval Latin* 8 (1998), 122–35.

⁸⁷ *Vita Ædwardi*, pp. 70–73.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 24–25.

⁸⁹ Otter, 'Closed Doors', pp. 65–66. Stacy Klein also comments on how the Anonymous 'casts [Edith] as a kind of mother to everyone'; Klein, 'Centralizing feminism', p. 157.

⁹⁰ *Vita Ædwardi*, pp. 90–91.

of her relationship to her husband and family in the context of her virtuous widowhood (and perhaps her earlier chaste marriage) and her promotion of Edward's sanctity through the *Vita* itself. The disparate roles played by Edith at different moments throughout the *Vita Ædwardi* reflect the challenges negotiated by the Anonymous in representing, in panegyric terms, her unconventional and, according to traditional expectations, unsuccessful, career as queen.⁹¹ As with the other texts discussed in this chapter, the disjunctions between Edith's performed roles and the historical reality of her life (for example, her repeated representation through maternal imagery but lack of biological motherhood) draw attention to the text's use of crafted, constructed personae.

The text's most intense explorations of the dynamics of literary production, patronage, and the relationship of the Anonymous to Edith occur in the author's dialogue with his Muse in the verse prologues to Books I and II of the *Vita*. Whilst the prose throughout the *Vita Ædwardi* is rhymed, and thus clearly has significant oral / aural qualities, these prologues, like the verses embedded elsewhere in the text, are particularly performative in idiom. The exchange between Poet and Muse in these prologues is highly dramatic, yet emerges as more complex and ambiguous than a straightforward dialogue. Indeed, far more than two personae are imbricated in these imagined conversations, although the range of roles and identities figured in the text are often inter-related, overlapping and blurred. Perhaps most crucially, the construction of the persona of the Muse both allows the Anonymous to reflect upon issues of patronage, deference and service through literature, yet also complicates and obscures his relationship to Edith as patron. The *Vita Ædwardi* begins with the address of the Anonymous (here cast in the persona of 'Poeta') to the Muse, imagined as his 'soror' ('sister') and aid.⁹² In conventional terms which recall aspects of the persona adopted by Cynewulf at the end of *Elene*, the Anonymous presents himself as old, weary and despairing, with the Muse as a classicised figure for creative illumination and inspiration – appropriate in this highly Latinate, self-consciously learned text.

Nos tenuous, rebus dilapsis, pluris egemus,
quos reparare solet spes tua. Surge, soror.

And I,

Poor me, all ruined now, lack much; and your
Assurance always mends. Sister, arise!⁹³

Already here, any hierarchy of authority or agency between Poet and Muse is playfully ambiguous: whilst the Muse intervenes to offer support and encouragement, the text figures the moment at which the Anonymous imaginatively calls her into being with the imperative 'Surge'. As a feminine visitor who provides hope ('spes')

⁹¹ Edith, of course, did not produce an heir for Edward. The Anonymous also has to deal with issues such as the rebellion of members of her family, and her temporary repudiation by Edward during the events of 1051–52. See Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith*, pp. 40–45.

⁹² *Vita Ædwardi*, pp. 2–3.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

and comfort, the Poet's Muse here recalls both the Lady Philosophy known to Anglo-Saxon audiences through Boethius's *Consolatio Philosophiae* (as well as the Alfredian vernacular version),⁹⁴ and Marian imagery which presents the Virgin as intercessor and aid. The Poet's Muse promises to provide him with 'fida ... ope' ('trusty aid'), urging:

Ergo neglectas post tempora longa tabellas
cum graphio repetens, accipe quid iubeam.

Therefore take up the stylus once again,
The tablets long unused, and hear my will.⁹⁵

The role of the Poet is cast here as dependent on the will and encouragement of his Muse: a symbolic acknowledgement that the production of the text cannot begin with author alone but requires external impetus and initiation.

Thus the Muse arrives to offer aid – and to provide the subject-matter ('materies', 'gesta') for the text – after the Poet's barren creative period.⁹⁶ Yet, in the Poet's responding speech, the persona of the Muse is apparently displaced and superseded by that of Edith as the text's patron and inspiration. The Poet now declares that it is Edith who will support and encourage him, as Stacy Klein has noted, 'happily abandoning [the Muse] when Edith appears as an intercessor for her mythical sister'.⁹⁷ The Poet professes his willingness to write anything

...si tamen ad laudes attineat domine,
cui me uouisti specialius ac monuisti
ut nostros casus respiceret propius.

So long as it concerns my lady's fame,
For you have vowed me specially to her
Bidding her closely watch my stumbling steps.⁹⁸

Here Edith assumes the role of guide and support to the Poet in his project, her persona blurred and conflated with that of the Muse. This deft textual sleight of hand enables the *Vita* to articulate issues of patronage and panegyric relevant to its own origins, whilst sidestepping and euphemising the question of Edith's own role in commissioning a text (at least partially) in praise of herself. The text displaces and deflects questions of command and commission by using the persona of the Muse to instigate the text and only subsequently turning its attention to Edith. Whilst the Muse commands, Edith steps in to support and guide the project. The Anonymous carefully negotiates the complex politics of panegyric (here complicated even further

⁹⁴ See Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, in *Boethius: The Theological Tractates and The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. S.J. Tester (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), pp. 130–435, esp. pp. 132–39. In the Alfredian version, significantly, Lady Philosophy is re-imagined as a male figure. See the discussion in Lerer, *Literacy and Power*, p. 63.

⁹⁵ *Vita Ædwardi*, pp. 4–5.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Klein, 'Centralizing feminism', p. 157.

⁹⁸ *Vita Ædwardi*, pp. 4–5.

by the *Vita*'s potential positioning as hagiography), exonerating the noble patron from any suspicion of vanity or pride, yet simultaneously conferring clear prestige upon the text through intimate association with her from the start.

This speech by the Poet to his Muse, with his first references to his patron, is marked by unmistakable rhetoric of service and devotion, again, as in the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, resonating with emergent ideologies of courtesy, courtliness and 'dominism'.

Respexit miserans, miserata manum dedit, et sic
stare iubet, casum ne subeamus item.
Compos promissi, fallacies nescia dicti,
dum uiuit, certe uiuimus; id satis est.
Illa pedes fixit, nos ut de morte reduxit,
et simul abiectos restituit calamos.
Vouimus hos illi per secula sic famulari,
ut quicquid referant, laus et honor sit ei.

Pitying she looked, and pitiful reached out,
And made me stand lest I should fall again.
Mistress of her troth and free from lies,
While she lives, so do I – and that's enough.
She fixed her feet, restored me as from death,
Put back the pens that I had thrown away;
And these as slaves I dedicate to her,
And what they write will be to her esteem.⁹⁹

Here the author's relationship to his female patron is figured in terms of service and desire: whilst the Anonymous labours on the text itself, a more fundamental agency is attributed to Edith as both the source and object of the writer's creative endeavours. Edith is the exemplar of the courtly lady, offering pity and aid to her desiring yet unworthy servant. The Poet's language is affective, intense and hyperbolic, claiming that his fate is dependent on his lady, with even life and death resting in her power. The comment that Edith is 'Compos promissi' ('Mistress of her troth' or 'in command of her promise') is suggestive of a pact between the author and his patron, figuring the pragmatics of a literary commission in terms of a more intimate, personal bond or oath. The Poet's profession that his pens will work as 'famulari' to Edith also resonates with the discourse of courtly service, drawing on the language of enslavement which will later become a conventional *fin amor* trope. Indeed, the choice of *famulari* rather than *serui* draws in a further dimension of intimacy, suggesting the private, domestic space of the *familia* or household with its most privileged personal servants. Here the Anonymous writes himself into Edith's intimate personal coterie: the Poet is her humble servant, yet enjoys privileged intimacy, favour and access.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ *Vita Ædwardi*, pp. 4–5.

¹⁰⁰ This could be compared with the slightly later 'Adelae Comitissae' written by Baudri of Bourgueil for Adela of Blois, daughter of William the Conqueror. Through its extended ekphrasis of what is

Later, the Muse commends the Poet's project, but warns that

Hanc, licet affectum languentis posse relinquat,
dices pro merito nobiliore stilo.

You'll tell of her with noble style, as she
Deserves, although your pow'rs may fail your love.¹⁰¹

This hint of ineffable love and admiration is again suggestive of the ideologies of courtliness, anticipating the typical mannered language and postures of later courtesy and romance discourse. Once again, the Poet performs the persona of devoted, desiring servant, with Edith cast as his pitying and merciful lady. And again, as with certain personae shaped for Emma in the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, we can detect traces of the secular culture of 'dominism' which Bond identifies from the mid-eleventh century onwards. Interestingly, Pauline Stafford has commented on the ways in which both Emma and Edith were readily appropriated into twelfth-century romance and its conventional discourses. She argues that 'Chivalric Romance' provides an important context for understanding later representations of these two Anglo-Saxon royal women, observing that 'In Emma, than whom there could be no fairer woman, in the beautiful young Edith, we meet its stock faces.'¹⁰² Citing the work of Gaimar and Wace, she remarks that 'Chroniclers who wrote in this vein often stood closer to lay practice than their monastic counterparts' and that their work might be 'more sensitive to court practice'.¹⁰³ Yet even in the *Vita Ædwardi* itself, I would suggest, there are traces of an early culture of courtliness and idealisation of the lady, which will develop more fully in twelfth-century literature. The emergent rhetoric of 'dominism' provides a set of personae and relational gendered roles which allow the Anonymous to present his female patron in a position of power and authority – in primarily secular terms – and to figure his role as (masculine) author as subservient and contingent.

Economies of literary production are also framed in other ways within the *Vita*, and particularly within its verse prologues. After the Poet's profession of devotion to his lady, and self-identification as loving servant, he frames his role in alternative terms.

Nunc dicenda doce; simili, te preduce, uoce,
discipuli studio, subsequar ut potero.

Now teach the words: I'll follow as I can,

supposedly Adela's bedchamber, the poet similarly writes himself into her private, intimate space, bringing together a latent eroticism with deference to Adela as a powerful ruler. See Monika Otter, 'Baudri of Bourgueil, "To Countess Adela"', *Journal of Medieval Latin* 11 (2001), 60–141, Shirley Ann Brown and Michael W. Herren, 'The *Adelae Comitissae* of Baudri of Bourgueil and the Bayeux Tapestry', in *The Study of the Bayeux Tapestry*, ed. Richard Gameson (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 139–56, and Kimberley A. LoPrete, *Adela of Blois: Countess and Lord c. 1067–1137* (Dublin, 2007), p. 193.

¹⁰¹ *Vita Ædwardi*, pp. 6–7.

¹⁰² Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith*, p. 19.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

A pupil echoing his master's voice.¹⁰⁴

These lines now figure the Muse as teacher, with the author as humble, diligent pupil. Yet, given the conflation between the roles of Muse and Edith which has already accrued during the Poet's speech, this analogy also suggests an alternative formulation of the relationship between the Anonymous and his royal patron. Indeed, the image of the teacher recalls Edith's role at court in caring for the boys' education,¹⁰⁵ and she is cast again as a patient tutor by the Muse in the verse prologue to Book II, where the Poet is cautioned:

Si tabulas nostras et cetera meque magistram
reicis inmeritam, hic tibi casus erit.

If you reject our tablets, things, and me,
Your guiltless mistress, you will badly err.¹⁰⁶

Here, the Anonymous's concerns about how to write the bleak events of recent history are transformed into the petulance of an errant pupil. By performing this role, the Anonymous defuses the potential danger of his material and his panegyric project, and again figures his role as dependent on the will and guidance of Edith. Yet their relationship is framed differently here: at this moment of tragedy, conflict and death it would be inappropriate to draw, however obliquely, on the tropes of quasi-erotic service and courtly devotion. Instead, Edith assumes the persona of the patient, caring tutor, guiding her pupil through a difficult, yet important, lesson. In general, throughout the verse prologue to Book II, the roles of Muse and Edith are again interchangeable and overlapping as sources of consolation, encouragement and strength.

In these verse prologues, the anonymous writer of the *Vita Edwardi*, in his dramatised persona as 'Poeta', explores the economies and inter-relationships which both enable and complicate the production of his text. The use of a range of personae and roles is crucial to this process, and Edith's female gender evidently suggests to the Anonymous a range of relational gendered pairings which express, in nuanced ways, the forms of collaboration and hierarchy between author and patron. The Anonymous sustains parallels and ambiguities between the traditionally feminine role of the Muse and that of his actual patron, Edith, and this fits into a broader range of feminine figures of power and authority within the text including *Musa*, *magistra* and *domina*. In relation to these powerful female personae, the masculine author is imagined as desiring servant (with his pens as *famulari* metonymic of his role), humble pupil and *discipulus*. These pairings of performed personae all rely on the citation of received (or emergent) gendered roles in order to express, in symbolic and sometimes euphemised ways, the economies of agency and hierarchy between author and patron. Writing for a female patron, the Anonymous draws on established traditions such as Marian imagery and the classical figure of the Muse, yet he also

¹⁰⁴ *Vita Edwardi*, pp. 4–5.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 24–25.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 90–91.

draws in newer discourses of courtesy and 'dominism' in order to express the power of the lady and to align ultimate textual authority and cultural agency with the feminine. Yet, once again, as with the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, Edith's performances of seemingly empowering and legitimising personae within the text are all shaped and manipulated by her male author. As much as these symbolic roles of Muse, teacher, lady and mother might allow Edith a range of different kinds of agency as patron of the text, they also circumscribe and confine her within the author's constructs. Like the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, the *Vita Ædwardi* reminds us that the language of gender can be used in flexible and fluid ways in Anglo-Saxon texts to think through and articulate the processes of textual production and patronage. Power and cultural agency is not exclusively associated with the masculine – though the performances of feminine power examined here must always remain limited and ambivalent as the impersonations of their male authors and products of the compromises made by 'bespoken' female patrons.

The *Vita Ædwardi* is, it would initially seem, a very different text from the Old English poem discussed at the beginning of this chapter. An Anglo-Latin work generated by largely secular, political motivations and engaging with a very specific historical context and the concerns of a particular (known) patron, the text has usually been read in very different ways, and in different spheres of scholarship, from Cynewulf's *Elene*. Yet Stacy Klein has compared the two texts, exploring the ways in which both show an interest in themes of 'biological reproduction, spiritual mothering, and artistic inspiration'.¹⁰⁷ Within her focus on representations of motherhood, Klein draws further parallels between the texts.

Much as Edith restores the author's powers of creative expression, so too does *Elene* restore Cynewulf's. In both the *Vita Ædwardi* and in *Elene*, motherhood is allied with the power of creative thought and expression. And, in both texts, motherhood is depicted as a cultural phenomenon that encompasses a range of activities beyond biological reproduction.¹⁰⁸

Klein's analysis calls attention to motherhood as a symbolic discourse which can articulate the processes of literary inspiration and patronage, reminding us once again of the varied and flexible possibilities which gendered discourses and roles can offer for Anglo-Saxon explorations of cultural production. Both the *Vita Ædwardi* and *Elene* use the maternal role as one which can suggest the complex, indirect agency of the patron in literary production, and as a paradigm which can figure hierarchies and economies between patron, author and text in subtle ways. Beyond the particular metaphor of the mother, all three texts discussed in this chapter reflect the skilful selection and performance of a range of gendered personae – both masculine and feminine, and not rigidly placed in any one fixed symbolic hierarchy – to suggest aspects of the collaboration and reciprocity involved in literary production.

The concept of performance links all three texts examined in detail in this chapter. Actors within the text assume a variety of roles according to narrative moment and

¹⁰⁷ Klein, 'Centralizing feminism', p. 157.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

their shifting relationships with others – including Elene’s adoption of both maternal and martial personae, Emma’s range of identities from Judith and Dido to Octavian, and Edith’s various personae as mother, lady and muse. In broader terms, all three texts reflect participation in a literary culture of performance and citation, as models and authorising personae from classical, biblical and Anglo-Saxon heroic traditions are cued through received formulae and recognisable allusion and quotation. The *Encomium Emmae Reginae* and *Vita Ædwardi* are both also suggestive of a wider culture of performance and display at the late Anglo-Saxon court, in which personae are shaped and sustained through self-conscious processes of public display, self-presentation and self-fashioning. All three texts, then, reflect an acute awareness of the centrality of performance to the formation and projection of identities. The performed, selective and constructed nature of identity is further signalled in the texts not only through the changeable, shifting personae adopted by their central actors, but also through the frequent, apparently self-conscious disjunctions between those personae and any sense of ‘real’ or ‘natural’ referential identity. Such examples might include Elene’s performance of masculine-coded activities, Cynewulf’s persona as a humble handmaid, Emma’s presentation in terms of a male Roman emperor, or Edith’s consistent depiction in maternal terms despite her well-known and problematic lack of biological motherhood. As discussed throughout this chapter, attention to gender and relational gendered roles is also crucial to these texts’ explorations of personae and performance. A repertoire of both masculine and feminine personae is apparently available to express a range of different kinds of agency and authority, though moving beyond ‘natural’ gender (as in the case of Elene’s martial activity or Emma’s imperial image as Octavian) has the potential to invite troubling questions as well as empowering possibilities. As emphasised throughout this analysis, these textual personae cannot be imagined as autonomous and self-defining: they are constructed through complex transactions between authors, patrons and audiences, involving processes which I have described (following the critical vocabulary of Gerald Bond) as impersonation, self-impersonation and reverse impersonation.

Within this wider culture of performance and the use of ‘polymorphic’ identities and personae,¹⁰⁹ this chapter has focused on the use of relational gendered roles to articulate and reflect upon the shifting inter-relationships between author and patron (whether historical or imagined, or an ambiguous conflation of both). Across different languages (Old English and Anglo-Latin) and genres (including, according to a variety of critical perspectives, heroic verse, hagiography, panegyric and history), the three texts discussed in this chapter are all positioned within a similar cultural framework, able to draw on mutually-recognisable personae and their associated tropes. While *Elene* positions itself in relation to two imagined patrons, Elene herself and God, the *Encomium Emmae Reginae* and *Vita Ædwardi* respond to the reality of female patronage, seeking appropriate models and discourses to present Emma and Edith within the texts. However, more importantly, all three texts demonstrate the

¹⁰⁹ For the concept of the ‘polymorphic’ self, see Bond, *The Loving Subject*, p. 67.

suggestive possibilities of gender and gendered personae to think through and articulate the complex, shifting, and often ambiguous inter-relationships which underpin literary production. The range of relational gendered roles in these texts includes such pairings as (Marian) handmaid and God, lady and desiring servant, teacher and pupil, mother and son, Muse and poet. The personae attached to author and patron are not fixed, but constantly shift both across and within the texts. To express the author-patron relationship through any single one of these pairings would be reductive and simplifying; these symbolic pairings of personae also resist any straightforward decoding which might identify the hierarchy or attribution of agency between author and patron in definitive, categorical terms. Rather, the performance of these suggestive, shifting personae casts the inter-relationship between author and patron in diverse ways, inviting reflection upon issues of collaboration, power and relative status. Whilst these late Anglo-Saxon texts may all, to varying degrees, obscure the pragmatic historical details of how their own production was transacted and supported, they all reflect an acute interest in ways of conceptualising and representing relationships of patronage and power, writing authors and patrons into a complex web of textual performances.

Remembering Anglo-Saxon Patronage: the *Libellus Æthelwoldi Episcopi* and its Contexts

The *Libellus Æthelwoldi Episcopi* (or *Libellus Æthelwoldi*, or simply the Ely *Libellus*) is an early twelfth-century Latin translation of a collection of Old English charters which attest the lands acquired for Ely by Æthelwold during the period of the tenth-century Benedictine Reform and re-foundation of the abbey. Produced at the instigation of Hervey, first bishop of Ely, between 1109 and 1131, the *Libellus Æthelwoldi* both commemorates the ‘Golden Age’ of the monastic community at Ely in the late Anglo-Saxon period, and does important political work in establishing the legitimacy of the new Ely bishopric in the early twelfth century. Both of these potential contexts for the *Libellus* and its integral documents – the re-foundation of Ely as a reformed monastic community in the late tenth century and its division into abbey and see in the early twelfth century – are moments of transition and tension, involving protracted disputes over land-rights and possessions and the re-negotiation of power and authority. The *Libellus Æthelwoldi* makes use of the Anglo-Saxon past to legitimise its twelfth-century present, presenting Æthelwold as an authorising mirror for Hervey and appropriating ideas of reform, zeal and saintliness to construct a powerful image for the new bishop and his administration.

Most interestingly from the perspective of this study, the *Libellus Æthelwoldi* constructs a strong ideology of power and patronage, and a compelling image of the patron as a charismatic figure who champions the needs and claims of his community. Æthelwold himself drives change, pursues goals and achieves successes for Ely, and the text repeatedly attaches sole agency to him as the procurer and protector of Ely’s lands. This image of the powerful patron is of course valuable and expedient for Bishop Hervey, commissioning the *Libellus* in the early twelfth century as part of his wider strategies to establish his authority and support his claims to the possessions of the new bishopric (as well as his ambitions beyond). Closer critical reading of the *Libellus Æthelwoldi*, however, reveals a much more complex picture of the workings of patronage within the local community of late Anglo-Saxon Ely. The local laity appears to play a major role in the endowment and ongoing support of the abbey, and the text’s accounts of negotiations between Æthelwold and secular landholders suggest a pattern of giving, selling, withdrawing and re-giving which is

based on complex networks of power and obligation. Once again, the exercise of power is in fact located within a complex economy of relationships and material exchanges. Rather than the will of one powerful individual, patronage emerges as negotiated and transacted – the product of social and economic contracts and compromises which are constantly revised and re-made. Yet the *Libellus* text works hard to construct and maintain its explicit image of the powerful patron and his absolute authority or agency. Lay involvement at Ely is repeatedly characterised as problematic, obstructive or threatening to the abbey, whilst Æthelwold battles the local secular community to secure the abbey's rights. This portrayal of Æthelwold as a charismatic, powerful spiritual patron is supported by the Latin verses embedded within the *Libellus*, which draw on hagiographic and panegyric tropes to represent an idealised, stylised image of the patron figure. The prosimetrical nature of the *Libellus Æthelwoldi* has not received proper attention from literary scholars, yet the complex inter-relationships between its prose and verse elements reveal the disjunctions and tensions between the realities and politically-expedient ideals of religious patronage. The *Libellus Æthelwoldi* cannot be treated as a straightforward record of Anglo-Saxon patronage as its account of tenth-century Ely is refracted through twelfth-century politics and agendas. Yet the *Libellus* is valuable and important for its early construction and promotion of the patron figure, and for the complex literary strategies which enable this. My analysis of the text will move towards a detailed consideration of its prosimetrical form, paying sustained attention to stylistic features and the ideological implications of its complex, dual literary structure for its formulation(s) of authority and power.

The *Libellus Æthelwoldi Episcopi* exists in two manuscripts, both written at Ely: British Library MS Cotton Vespasian A.xix, ff. 2–27v (designated manuscript 'A' by E.O. Blake, the editor of the later *Liber Eliensis*), and Trinity College, Cambridge, O.2.41, ff. 1–64v (Blake's manuscript 'C', and the earlier of the two manuscripts in date).¹ Blake notes that:

Both manuscripts belong to the end of the twelfth century and C was probably written between April 1139 and the end of 1140. These two versions of the *Libellus* are, but for a few unimportant variant readings, identical. They give a brief account of the restoration of Ely, with echoes from Wulfstan's *Life* of St Æthelwold, and a record of lands acquired by him on behalf of Ely and of pleas which arose from those transactions. This record, originally written in Old English, had been preserved at Ely and was translated into Latin – according to the translator's own statement – at the instigation of Bishop Hervey, that is between 1109 and 1131, and was known as the *liber de terriis sancti Æthelwoldi*.²

Indeed, the prologue of the *Libellus* states very clearly that the book's materials are translated from Old English sources, reporting Bishop Hervey's request that the achievements of Æthelwold should be recorded in a new Latin text.

¹ *Liber Eliensis*, ed. E.O. Blake (London, 1962), p. xxxiv.

² *Liber Eliensis*, ed. Blake, p. xxxiv.

Que dum uir prudens et egregius Herueus, uenerabilis Elyensis ecclesie episcopus, relatu digna comperibat, rogatu quorundam fratrum mihi iniunxit, ut ea de Anglico idiomate in Latinum sermonem transferrem.

When that farsighted and distinguished man, Hervey, the worthy bishop of the church of Ely, discovered that these matters were worthy of report, he laid it upon me, at the request of some of the brothers, to translate them from the English language into Latin prose.³

Although the reported Old English source remains unknown, Blake and Edward Miller both argue that the sequence of entries in the *Libellus* land records, as well as some occasional comments on transactions, do strongly suggest an earlier source (perhaps a collection of charters) dating to the time of the re-foundation and expansion of Ely in the late Anglo-Saxon period.⁴ Although there remains no formal record of the authorship of the *Libellus Æthelwoldi*, Michael Lapidge has examined a range of stylistic similarities between its verses and a metrical *Vita* of St Æthelthryth, written at Ely between 1116 and 1131 by a monk named Gregory ('Gregorius Eliensis monachus'). On the grounds of these stylistic affinities, as well as the shared provenance and dating of the texts, Lapidge offers the suggestion that 'Gregory was the author of the Æthelwold verses' in the *Libellus Æthelwoldi*.⁵ This presents a possible picture of an Ely monk working under the patronage of Bishop Hervey to consolidate and translate Old English materials in the early part of the twelfth century. In terms of audience, the *Libellus*, like most medieval house chronicles, seems designed to serve the needs of the immediate religious community, although Jennifer Paxton suggests that texts such as these may also have 'been intended to serve as the basis for a sort of "textual community" that would draw the surrounding lay people into the orbit of the monastic house'.⁶

The *Libellus Æthelwoldi* is well known to historians working on late Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical and legal history, and has often been exploited as a source for the tenth-century Benedictine Reform and the career of Æthelwold.⁷ Notably, Alan Kennedy has examined the complex legal processes of land acquisition and transfer recorded in the *Libellus*, and Patrick Wormald has discussed the text's evidence for the role of 'witnesses' and origins of 'jury' procedure in Anglo-Saxon law.⁸ However, the *Libellus*

³ Simon Keynes and Alan Kennedy, *Anglo-Saxon Ely* (forthcoming). All subsequent quotations from the *Libellus Æthelwoldi Episcopi* are taken from this edition. I am grateful to the authors for allowing me to use this unpublished material.

⁴ *Liber Eliensis*, ed. Blake, p. lii; E. Miller, *The Abbey and Bishopric of Ely* (Cambridge, 1969), pp. 4, 16.

⁵ Wulfstan of Winchester, *The Life of St Æthelwold*, ed. M. Lapidge and M. Winterbottom (Oxford, 1991), p. 83.

⁶ Jennifer Paxton, 'Textual Communities in the English Fenlands: A Lay Audience for Monastic Chronicles?', *Anglo-Norman Studies* XXVI (2004), pp. 123–38, p. 123. For further discussion of lay involvement at Ely, see below, pp. 151–58.

⁷ See for example Mechthild Gretsch, *The Intellectual Foundations of the English Benedictine Reform* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 228–30.

⁸ A. Kennedy, 'Law and Litigation in the *Libellus Æthelwoldi Episcopi*', *Anglo-Saxon England* 24 (1995), 131–84; P. Wormald, 'Neighbors, Courts, and Kings: Reflections on Michael Macnair's *Vicini*', *Law and History Review* 17 (1999), 597–601.

remains unknown or neglected by scholars of medieval literature, partly due to the unavailability of a full edition. Whilst the prose material of the *Libellus Æthelwoldi* was incorporated into Book II of the later *Liber Eliensis*, the verses were not included. These verses have only been generally available to modern readers through their inclusion in an Appendix to Blake's edition of the *Liber Eliensis* and similarly in an Appendix to Janet Fairweather's translation.⁹ This unsatisfactory separation of the poems from their contextual material has meant that the prosimetrical nature of the text – and the complex inter-relationships between prose and verse elements – have been obscured, and the complete work has been unavailable in published form for analysis. The edition and translation by Simon Keynes and Alan Kennedy, forthcoming as *Anglo-Saxon Ely*, will rectify this situation and present the full text of the *Libellus* (based on Blake's manuscript C, with some readings from A) for study. This may encourage literary scholarship on the *Libellus*, which has so far received little attention beyond its value as a source for late Anglo-Saxon history.

The Prologue of the *Libellus* calls attention to the text itself as the product of patronage – both the immediate patronage of Hervey in commissioning the translation, and the spiritual patronage of Æthelwold as its ultimate source.¹⁰ Æthelwold is described in conventional terms as a saintly figure 'cuius uita uirtutibus gloriosa et miraculis clara effulsit' ('whose most glorious and distinguished life shone forth in virtues and miracles'), and Hervey is portrayed as the 'uir prudens et egregius' ('farsighted and distinguished man') who rescues the deeds of Æthelwold from obscurity and orders their commemoration in Latin. The author of the *Libellus* himself draws on conventional modesty *topoi* to present the act of composition as a gesture of submission and humility rather than presumptuous pride, writing that:

Cuius precepto nullatenus contraire ausus, parui et iniunctum opus suscepi ac pro facultate mea ad unguem perducere curauim. Ubi siquid positum est quod Deo acceptum sit, non tumori arrogantie deputetur, sed obedientie bono commendetur.

In no way venturing to disobey his [i.e. Hervey's] command, I obeyed and, taking up the work laid upon me, I took pains to continue it through to the very end as far as I was able. If there is anything set down there which is acceptable to God, let it not be attributed to burgeoning arrogance, but set to the credit of the virtue of obedience.¹¹

The Prologue consistently foregrounds issues of memory and forgetting, setting up a series of binary oppositions between knowledge and ignorance, commemoration and loss, light and darkness, (pagan) fiction and (Christian) truth. The text begins with an assertion of the importance of written records and the preservation of the past.

⁹ *Liber Eliensis*, trans. Janet Fairweather (Woodbridge, 2005).

¹⁰ Simon Keynes notes that the *Libellus* is of interest in part because it stems from a cultivation of Æthelwold rather than Æthelthryth, patron of Ely. See Simon Keynes, 'Ely Abbey 672–1109', in *A History of Ely Cathedral*, ed. Peter Meadows and Nigel Ramsay (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 3–58, p. 7.

¹¹ *Libellus*, Prologue.

Cum preteritarum notitia rerum ignorantie tenebris queat inuolui et, uicissitudine rerum interueniente, ab humana memoria facile poterit labi, opere precium est, ut illud quod sic gestum est, quod dignum memoria sit, sedulo stili officio commendetur, quatenus sic memorie representetur quod, nisi scriptum fuerit, obliuioni tradetur.

Since the knowledge of past things can be enveloped in the darkness of ignorance and, in the changing nature of things in the passage of time, can easily be lost from human memory, it is worth the labour to entrust what has been done which is worthy of remembrance to the diligent work of a pen, so that what would be consigned to oblivion, unless it were written down, may thus be set forth for remembrance.¹²

The text then announces its commemoration of Æthelwold as a pious alternative to the celebration of pagan heroes and exploits in classical texts.

Cumque gentilium figmenta siue deliramenta cum omni studio uideamus composita, coloribus hrethoricis ornata et, quasi quodammodo depicta, cathegoricis syllogismis et argumentationibus circumfulta et corroborata, in gymnasiis et scolis publice celebrata et cum laude recitata, dignum duximus ut sanctorum dicta et facta describantur et descripta ad laudem et honorem Christi referantur, ut per illos et in illis ipse glorificetur et mirabilis predicetur, per quem ipsi gloriosi fiunt et mirabilia operantur.

And when we see the fictions and absurdities of the pagans composed in all seriousness, adorned and, as it were, painted with the colours of rhetoric, strengthened and supported by logical deductions and the setting out of proofs, openly celebrated in colleges and schools, and recited with praise, we have supposed it worthy that the words and deeds of the saints be written down and, once committed to writing, be applied to the praise and honour of Christ, since through them and in them He Himself may be glorified and declared wonderful, through whom they become glorious and perform their marvels.¹³

The Prologue is acutely aware of its participation in the wider politics of remembering and forgetting – both the accidents of loss and ignorance, as well as the historically-situated and selective processes of commemoration and recording. The text refers readers to Wulfstan's *Vita* for a more detailed account of Æthelwold's life ('legat librum qui de ortu et de uita necnon de obitu eius contextus est') and Keynes and Kennedy identify stylistic resonances or borrowings from Wulfstan of Winchester throughout these passages.¹⁴ The more general deployment throughout the Prologue of imagery of light and shining to suggest the virtue and saintliness of Æthelwold is also suggestive of the panegyric rhetoric of Benedictine Reform texts.¹⁵

¹² *Libellus*, Prologue.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ For example 'ignorantie tenebris' ('the darkness of ignorance'), 'obliuioni tradetur' ('consigned to oblivion'), 'dignum duximus' ('we have supposed it worthy').

¹⁵ For example, Æthelwold's life 'clara effulsit' ('[brightly] shone forth') in fulfilment of God's command 'Luceat lux uestra coram hominibus' ('Let your light shine upon men'). For similar

The Prologue immediately reveals the *Libellus* to be a sophisticated work which self-consciously negotiates issues of memory and history, and which is able to select particular rhetorical idioms, allusions and *topoi* in order to call up appropriate cultural and historical associations.

The tenth-century history narrated by the *Libellus Æthelwoldi* centres on the re-foundation of Ely as a reformed monastic community within the wider context of the Benedictine Revival. Æthelwold's re-foundation of the abbey is also attested in Wulfstan's *Vita Æthelwoldi*, which gives a neatly condensed account of the project.

Est enim quaedam regio famosa in prouincia Orientalium Anglorum sita, paludibus et aquis in modum insulae circumdata, unde et a copia anguillarum quae in eisdem paludibus capiuntur Ælig nomen accepit. In qua regione reliquiis et miraculis sanctae Æthelthrythae reginae et perpetuae uirginis ac sororum eius; se in ipso tempore erat destitutus et regali fisco deditus. Hunc ergo locum famulus Christi pro dilectione tantarum uirginum magnopere uenerari coepit, datoque precio non modicae pecuniae emit eum a rege Eadgaro, constituens in eo monachorum gregem non minimum. Quibus ordinauit abbatem Byrhtnodum praepositum sum, et eiusdem loci situm monasteriabilibus aedificiis decentissime renouauit, eumque terrarum possessionibus affluentissime locupletatem...

There is a well-known spot in East Anglia, surrounded like an island by swamps and water. From the quantity of eels taken in these marshes it has been given the name Ely. Here there is a place held to deserve all reverence, for it is made glorious by the relics and miracles of St Æthelthryth, queen and perpetual virgin, and her sisters. But at this time it was abandoned and pertained to the royal fisc. The servant of Christ began to reverence this place greatly, out of his love for the distinguished virgins, and he paid a large sum of money to buy it from King Edgar. In it he established a large group of monks, ordaining his prior Byrhtnoth as abbot. He renovated the place as it deserved, giving it monastery buildings, and enriched it lavishly with possessions and land.¹⁶

The *Libellus* itself records how Æthelwold 'diligenter renouauit, monasterialibus edificiis situm loci insigniter decorauit' ('carefully restored that community ... embellished the site of the place with monastic buildings in outstanding manner'). The period of the Benedictine Reform is then commemorated in a verse which celebrates it as a Golden Age for religion in England.

In mundo uere tunc aurea secla fuere,
Tunc uer eternum decus enituitque supernum.
Tunc et spinetum fuerat ceu suaue rosetum.
Lactea currebant, tunc flumina mella fluebant.
Tunc et sponte dabat tellus quod quisque rogabat.
Pura fides, pax, uerus amor, tunc emicuere.

imagery of light and saintliness in Benedictine Reform texts, see the poems to Bishop Dunstan in the *Vita Oswaldi* (discussed in Chapter 3 of this study).

¹⁶ Wulfstan, *Life of St Æthelwold*, ed. Lapidge and Winterbottom, pp. 38, 39.

Fraus, tumor et liuor, periuria tunc latuere.
 Tunc et libertas sedes habuit sibi certas.
 Tunc et in ecclesia fulserunt Martha, Maria.
 Tunc erat ordo bonus, cum floruit iste patronus.

There had then been golden ages in the world. There was then eternal spring, and a heavenly brightness shone out. The thorn bush then was like a sweet rose garden. [Rivers] of milk were running, [and] streams then flowed with mead. And the earth would give of its own will whatever anyone asked. At that time pure faith, peace, true love sprang forth. At that time deceit, arrogance and envy, perjury were hidden. Freedom was then on secure foundations. And in the church then Martha [and] Mary shone out. There was a good state of affairs then when that protector [that is, Æthelwold] was in his prime.¹⁷

The reign of Edgar is described as a time of ‘aurea secla’ (golden ages), with the hagiographic (and typically tenth-century Benedictine) imagery of light and brightness once again signalling virtue and piety. The poem draws on the conventional pastoral associations of the ‘Golden Age’, describing a ‘uer eternum’ (‘eternal spring’) and freely productive land which requires no labour. The imagery of milk and mead (honey) also suggests the biblical Promised Land, and the thorn bush transformed into a rose recalls the prophetic language of miraculous reversal in Isaiah Chapter 11 or possibly Chapter 2, verse 4. Represented metaphorically by Martha and Mary, both the active and contemplative lives are allowed to flourish, and the verses emphasise the period as free from conflict and corruption. The verse here culminates in praise of Æthelwold as protector or patron (‘patronus’), with the verb ‘floruit’ (literally, ‘flourished’, ‘flowered’) reinforcing the sense of his career as an integral part of this new spiritual springtime. The *Libellus* then goes on to catalogue in prose the lands acquired for Ely by Æthelwold, with details from the Old English documentary sources of the transactions and negotiations involved. However, the idealising panegyric language of this ‘Golden Age’ poem returns in the other *Libellus* verses which punctuate the text’s otherwise prosaic and legalistic idiom.

The accounts of land acquisitions and negotiations throughout the *Libellus Æthelwoldi* suggest a fraught context for Æthelwold’s re-foundation and endowment of Ely, with an insistent focus on tension, conflict and dispute. In particular, the local laity seems to represent a constant threat to the abbey’s possessions and security. Whilst gifts and sales are negotiated between Æthelwold and secular landholders, these initial agreements are repeatedly undermined by later treachery, withdrawal or usurpation. The acquisition of lands at Downham and Clayhithe is a typically rancorous and convoluted process. Æthelwold makes an agreement with Leofsige and his wife Sigeflæd to buy two hides at Downham for the price of fifteen pounds. Leofsige and Sigeflæd are given ten pounds, but before the remaining five pounds are paid to them, it is agreed that they should pay fifteen pounds to purchase from Æthelwold five hides at Clayhithe (receiving in addition a silver cup which had previously been given to Æthelwold by Leofsige’s father when he was dying).

¹⁷ *Libellus*, Chapter 3.

However, after the death of King Edgar, Leofsige and Sigeflæd renege on the deal, refusing to give Æthelwold the outstanding ten pounds and attempting to reclaim their former lands. Leofsige then pursues further ambitions, attempting to secure land in Peterborough, Oundle and Kettering. The *Libellus* regards Leofsige as ‘*Dei inimicus deceptorque hominum*’ (‘the enemy of God and deceiver of men’) and states that he ‘*Deoque ac sancte Petro abstulit cum rapina*’ (‘forcibly usurped ... from God and St Peter’) the additional lands at Peterborough, Oundle and Kettering. Eventually, the *Libellus* tells us, Æthelwold calls a meeting in London and summons Leofsige to justice.¹⁸ The lands of Peterborough, Oundle and Kettering are returned to Æthelwold, and, promptly afterwards:

...predictus Lefsius, qui seruus Dei tantum afficiebat, ultione diuina feruente turpiter ac miserabiliter interiit.

The aforesaid Leofsige, who so greatly afflicted the servants of God, died shamefully and miserably in a blaze of divine vengeance.¹⁹

However, Æthelwold then continues to pursue Sigeflæd, Leofsige’s widow, calling a meeting at which:

...inter alia iudicatum est, ut Sifled, relicta Lefsii, et heredes sui Deo et episcopo predictam rapinam emendare deberent, sicuti ipse, si uixisset, facere debuisset appretiaueruntque summam dampni quod episcopo intulerat plusquam .c. libras.

Among other matters it was there decided that Sigeflæd, the widow of Leofsige, and her heirs ought to pay compensation for the aforesaid violence to God and the bishop, just as he himself would have had to do if he had lived, and they assessed the amount of the damage he had done to the bishop at more than a hundred pounds.²⁰

After her pleas for mercy, the widow eventually receives more lenient treatment and Æthelwold – emerging victorious from this protracted series of disputes – takes back possession of the lands at both Downham and Clayhithe.

Whilst this is a particularly involved and convoluted example, the case of Downham and Clayhithe is in many ways typical of the land disputes presented in the *Libellus Æthelwoldi*. The text sets up a crude yet emphatic opposition between the laity as treacherous and opportunist and Æthelwold, acting on behalf of the monastic community, as fair, merciful and just. In his own pursuit of land acquisition, the *Libellus* tells us that Leofsige ‘*addidit... malum malo et dolum dolo*’ (‘heaped evil upon evil and trickery upon trickery’), whilst the designs of ‘*beatus Ædeluoldus episcopus*’ (‘blessed bishop Æthelwold’) reflect the workings of God’s will. Æthelwold is consistently associated with justice and mercy, and is represented as the

¹⁸ *Libellus*, Chapter 10.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Chapter 11.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

agent of God in his pursuit of the abbey's legal claims. After the collapse of the agreement with Leofsige and his wife, God intervenes through Æthelwold to restore order.

Videns ergo dominus Deus quantis iniuriis quantisque tribulationibus ille seductor seruos suos afficiebat, labores eorum miseratus est. Cuius misericordia sancta ecclesia recuperavit quod iniuste amisit.

Seeing therefore with what great injuries and tribulations that traitor was burdening his servants, the Lord God had pity on their hardships. Through his mercy Holy Church recovered what it unjustly lost.²¹

It is Æthelwold who convenes the meeting in London to decide on the case, and Æthelwold who 'insuper misericordius quam sperabant sibi fecit' ('acted more mercifully than they hoped for themselves') in arbitrating the final settlement which clears Sigeflæd of the need to pay compensation – but restores Downham and Clayhithe to the abbey. The local laity of Ely certainly plays a prominent role in the *Libellus*, but their consistent characterisation as wicked and treacherous sits uncomfortably with Paxton's suggestion that this kind of house chronicle might be intended for a secular as well monastic audience.²²

The account of Æthelwold's acquisition of land at Downham (and repossession of the hides at Clayhithe) ties the treachery of Leofsige to the death of Edgar and the disruption following the end of his reign. Throughout the *Libellus Æthelwoldi*, lay treachery and usurpation are attached to the death of Edgar, building a picture of the 'anti-monastic reaction' and the backlash against the reformed houses. For example, when Æthelwold purchases a hide and two weirs at Stretham from Ælfwold:

Post mortem uero Ædgari regis idem Alfuuoldus omne pactum fregit, dicens se coactum ad hoc fuisse et uim ac rapinam sibi illatam esse...

After the death of King Edgar, however, that Ælfwold broke the whole agreement, saying that he had been forced to it, and had been afflicted with violence and pillage.²³

Ælfwold's reported words hint at a further dimension behind the transactions recorded in the *Libellus*: whilst contracts are mutually agreed, the relationship between Æthelwold and small local landholders is asymmetric, with the abbey potentially having the power and influence to coerce a sale. When Æthelwold buys land at Linden and its dependencies from Leofric of Brandon:

Postea uero euoluto tempore et defuncto rege Ædgaro, nisus est idem Leouricus subdola calliditate omnem conuentionem quam cum episcopo fecerat annullare, si posset.

²¹ *Libellus*, Chapter 10.

²² Paxton, 'Textual Communities in the English Fenlands', p. 123. For a lay audience, these *Libellus* narratives might perhaps have a function as cautionary tales.

²³ *Libellus*, Chapter 8.

Afterwards indeed in the course of time and after the death of King Edgar, that same Leofric attempted with crafty cunning to annul, if he could, the whole of the agreement which he had made with the bishop.²⁴

The text is even more elaborate in its condemnation of Uvi, who breaks an agreement regarding land at Stonea after the death of Edgar.

Post mortem quoque Ædgari regis idem Uui, nolens unquam a procacitate sua desistere, uerum etiam dolis dolos et calumpniis calumpnias addens, fecit ut ille, qui iam letale uulnus in corpore habebat sed adhibitis medicis de uulnere fecit cicatricem, post cuius uero sanationem per propriam uecordiam cicatricem eandem redegit in uulnus ut, unde aliorum ope sanus fieri posset, sui ipsius insolentia inde mortem anticiparet.

And after the death of King Edgar that same Uvi, not wishing ever to desist from his impudence, added indeed trickeries to trickeries and claims to claims. He behaved like one who already had a fatal wound in his body and, after physicians had been summoned, produced scar tissue from the wound, after whose healing indeed through his own want of sense he turned the scar back into a wound so that, although he might be healed through the assistance of others, through his insolence on that account he met an early death.²⁵

These and other references to the death of Edgar and the attendant treachery of the local Ely laity fit alongside the picture of the ‘anti-monastic reaction’ presented by J.V. Fisher in his seminal study, as well as allusions in contemporary documents.²⁶ Whilst more recent re-evaluations have ‘agreed that politics, not antipathy to monasticism, lay behind the “anti-monastic reaction”’,²⁷ the *Libellus Æthelwoldi* certainly equates the disruption following the death of Edgar with hostility to the monastic community and resentment of its possessions. However, the death of Edgar and ‘anti-monastic reaction’ forms a neat strategy in the *Libellus* for explaining (or perhaps dismissing) all lay claims against the abbey and homogenising all local secular objection. It might even be argued that, in the case of the *Libellus*, such a wide-ranging and unifying anti-monastic movement amongst the laity is an expedient invention of the text itself. Certainly, the *Libellus* relies on this explanation throughout for disputes and conflicts with local secular landholders.

The case of Downham and Clayhithe is also typical in the complex nature of the transactions made between Æthelwold and the secular landholders. The purchase of land at Downham by Æthelwold, and of land at Clayhithe by Leofsige, appear at first to be two discrete sales. Yet clearly one is dependent on the other, and the two transactions form integral parts of a process of exchange. The transaction is further

²⁴ *Libellus*, Chapter 6.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Chapter 28.

²⁶ See Fisher, ‘The Anti-Monastic Reaction’. The *Vita Oswaldi* tells us that ‘Dixerunt impii apud se, non recte cogitantes: “Circumueniamus monachos et opprimamus eos et nostra erit hæreditas”’ (‘The wicked people said among themselves, not thinking righteously, “Let us overthrow the monks, and oppress them ‘and the inheritance shall be ours”’). *VSO*, pp. 126–27.

²⁷ John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 2005), p. 354.

complicated by the introduction of the silver cup, worth forty shillings, which had been given to Æthelwold by Leofsige's father. By including the return of the cup – with its emotive and heirloom value as well as material cost – in the agreement with Leofsige, Æthelwold secures further leverage. The mention of the cup and the previous gift-giving from Leofsige's family to Æthelwold is a strategic and significant detail. Æthelwold's offer of the cup implicitly alludes to the history of gift-giving, goodwill and mutual obligation between Leofsige's family and the abbey. The return of the cup obligates Leofsige, tying him into an ongoing process of exchange and co-operation with the monastery. Yet the text's mention of the cup also reveals the Downham and Clayhithe transactions to be far more than simply straightforward, discrete purchases. They are part of a much more established and continuous pattern of mutual exchange between the monastic and lay communities which is never necessarily final, static or closed.

The *Libellus Æthelwoldi*, then, consistently characterises the local laity as a threat to the abbey, ready to withdraw gifts, renege on contracts and usurp possessions. Yet a closer reading of the Downham and Clayhithe case suggests that the transactions and exchanges at Ely in the late tenth century may in fact fit within the norms of a local gift economy with its networks of relationship and obligation. In her seminal study of the possessions of Cluny in roughly the same period, Barbara Rosenwein has called attention to the ongoing process of 'giving, but also of taking and re-giving' which connected the monastery and the local lay community.²⁸ Rosenwein reminds us that gifts and sales can be (often deliberately) confused or clouded by the written sources, and emphasises that 'gifts did not constitute an irrevocable transfer of property'.²⁹ Rather, 'redonations suggest that the first donation may have been a social gesture, important (to be sure), but not the same as a land transfer'.³⁰ Rosenwein observes that:

...the same people who gave land to Cluny also took it away; the friends of Cluny were at the same time its enemies. This give and take constituted an important part of Cluny's property system. It involved not so much individuals as groups of friends, neighbors, family members, saints, and monks.³¹

Drawing on Rosenwein's work in her study of religious patronage in England after 1066, Emma Cownie argues that 'similarly, monasteries in post-Conquest England

²⁸ Barbara H. Rosenwein, *To be the Neighbour of Saint Peter: The Social Meaning of Cluny's Property, 909–1049* (Ithaca, 1989), p. 60. For another case study which highlights similar issues regarding donation and social networks, see Penelope D. Johnson, *Prayer, Patronage and Power: The Abbey of la Trinité, Vendôme, 1032–1187* (New York, 1981).

²⁹ Rosenwein, *To be the Neighbour of Saint Peter*, pp. 110–11. Alexander Rumble also reminds us that 'lay people were only very selectively mentioned in [ecclesiastical texts], mainly as benefactors or despoilers of the endowment', giving us a slanted picture of the realities of monastic and lay interaction. Alexander R. Rumble, 'The Laity and the Monastic Reform in the Reign of Edgar', in *Edgar: King of the English, 959–975*, ed. Donald Scragg (Woodbridge, 2008), pp. 242–51, p. 242.

³⁰ Rosenwein, *To be the Neighbour of Saint Peter*, p. 142.

³¹ Rosenwein, *To be the Neighbour of Saint Peter*, p. 12. For a broader discussion of these social processes, see also Donald Bullough, *Friends, Neighbours and Fellow-Drinkers: Aspects of Community and Conflict in the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge, 1990).

were no strangers to re-negotiating their control over land with donors' heirs and other relatives', and notes that 'Peterborough, Ely, Ramsey and Thorney appear to have concentrated largely on cultivating *quid pro quo* relations with local landholders'.³² Whilst their studies focus on different localities or periods, Rosenwein and Cownie offer productive paradigms for interpreting the accounts of tenth-century land transactions in the *Libellus Æthelwoldi*. The text presents the local laity as hostile, changeable and treacherous, yet details within it (such as Leofsige's father's silver bowl) hint at the reality of an ongoing local economy of exchange and obligation which cannot be closed or finalised at one particular moment – whatever Æthelwold's ambitions.

An episode in Chapter 7 of the *Libellus* offers another glimpse into the complex economy of relationships and material exchanges in late Anglo-Saxon Ely. Leofric of Brandon and his wife Æthelflæd succeed in persuading Æthelwold to dedicate their church.

Ubi itaque uentum erat ad hoc quod dedicata fuisset, pro amore et honore quem eis exhibuerat, optulerunt ei argenteam scutellam .xl. solidorum cum aliis rebus quamplurimis et optimis.

Accordingly when it had come to the point that it had been dedicated, for the love and honour which he had shown towards them, they gave him a silver bowl worth forty shillings, with very many other fine things.³³

However, Æthelwold's response uses this gift as the opening point in a process of negotiation.

'Karissimi, nolo argentum uestrum nec ista munera, sed hec omnia sint uestra. Tantummodo, karissime Leourice, annue, ut terram sororum duarum mihi emere liceat, scilicet .viii. hydas in Stretham quas Leouricus frater earum moriens eis dimisit.

'Most dear people, I do not want your silver, nor those gifts, but may they all be yours. Just only, most dear Leofric, grant that I may be permitted to buy the land belonging to two sisters, namely eight hides at Stretham which their brother Leofric bequeathed to them when he died.'³⁴

Æthelwold invokes affective language ('karissimi', 'karissime') to acknowledge the bond represented by the gift and its implicit statement of obligation. By refusing to accept the gift (through careful rhetoric of generosity: 'omnia sint uestra'), Æthelwold defers the debt and obligates Leofric into helping him obtain the land at Stretham. Thus Æthelwold exploits Leofric's connections and influence in his own locality in order to acquire the land belonging to the two sisters. Here we see a sophisticated gift

³² Emma Cownie, *Religious Patronage in Anglo-Norman England 1066–1135* (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 5, 128.

³³ *Libellus*, Chapter 7.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

economy in operation, which involves networks of relationship and obligation – ‘local circuits of power’ which involve constant re-negotiation.³⁵

Yet the *Libellus Æthelwoldi* misrepresents lay involvement and the healthy networks and economies of relationship and material exchange which contribute to the endowment of Ely Abbey and its foundation within the local community. The text elides the positive contribution of local secular landholders, characterising them as changeable and treacherous, and instead focuses on Æthelwold as the central patron figure with ultimate power and agency and with sole responsibility for the development and protection of the monastery’s lands. What factors might underlie the *Libellus*’s distorted representation of local networks and economies in tenth-century Ely? The first possibility is straightforward and basic: as its title makes clear, the twelfth-century text uses Æthelwold as the unifying motif for its collection of disparate charters and legal documents pertaining to the early history of the reformed abbey and its possessions. The focus on Æthelwold as central patron figure, securing lands in the face of resistance and rebellion from the local laity, transforms this bundle of separate Old English charters into a unified narrative of spiritual endeavour and triumph. Another possible explanation might be the failure of the twelfth-century compiler-author of the *Libellus* to understand the pre-Conquest past and the workings of late Anglo-Saxon law and society. Patrick Geary examines some relevant parallels from continental Europe, in which eleventh-century monastic chroniclers attempt to record the foundations and early endowments of their houses.

Even when they have the names of founders, benefactors and abbots, they have no understanding of the relationships among these persons or the political and social contexts within which they functioned. The relationships between monastic foundation, family power, and regional strategies ... while reconstructible from the information available to these authors, was entirely beyond their comprehension. Instead, both authors [Anonymous of Brema and Gottschalk of Benediktbeuern] present the foundations as motivated ... by miraculous events that led their founders to establish monasteries. The fabric of the past is thus depoliticized and decontextualized, projected out of the world of human events onto the miraculous world of myth.³⁶

Obviously, the *Libellus Æthelwoldi* represents a much more subtle and sophisticated case. The re-foundation of Ely is not attached so simplistically to a ‘miraculous event’, but rather to the miraculous virtue and divine inspiration of a real historical figure, Æthelwold. Yet the *Libellus* similarly replaces the realities of monastic foundation and endowment with a mythical alternative. The centrality of Æthelwold’s spiritual power, charisma and patronage offers a more accessible and straightforward

³⁵ The phrase is from Baxter, *The Earls of Mercia*, p. 203. This episode also resonates with the observation of Rosenwein *et al.* that these local disputes over land ‘were not so much “settled” as negotiated; compromises and face-saving solutions were favored over final verdicts’. See Barbara H. Rosenwein, Thomas Head and Sharon Farmer, ‘Monks and their Enemies: A Comparative Approach’, *Speculum* 66 (1991), 764–96, p. 764.

³⁶ Patrick J. Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the end of the First Millennium* (Princeton, 1994), p. 132.

framework for Ely's early history than the complexities of gift exchange, mutual obligation and ongoing negotiation. Yet this argument for the *Libellus* as an example of the failure of memory or historical understanding is not fully convincing. Its vision of the Anglo-Saxon past is far from 'depoliticized', but rather a deliberate construct which re-places the figure of Æthelwold and his patronage at the very centre of Ely and its history. This case of selective remembering – or re-making – the past perhaps tells us more about the twelfth century politics of Bishop Hervey's Ely than the realities of land acquisition in the tenth century.

The creation of the see of Ely in 1109 initiated the difficult process of dividing and re-distributing the abbey's lands between monastery and new bishopric. In his study of the archives of medieval Ely Nigel Ramsay reflects, in somewhat euphemistic terms, on the implications of the establishment of the new see.

The creation of the see of Ely, with the Bishop's *cathedra* or formal seat in the church of what had been Ely Abbey, cannot have been a wholly welcome development for the Ely monks. They gained a measure of greater dignity, including (in time) the notional right to elect successive bishops; but they lost a considerable proportion of their estates and income.³⁷

In fact, the division of the abbey's lands was a particularly bitter and tense process. The *Liber Eliensis* records the efforts of Hervey to assert ownership and control over the lands of the new bishopric, against evident resistance from both landholders amongst the local laity and the monks of the abbey. Book III, Chapter 9 narrates 'Quam viriliter Herveus episcopus ecclesiam suam de Ely et res ipsius ab iniusta oppressione eripuit' ('How manfully Bishop Hervey rescued his church of Ely and its properties from unlawful possession'),³⁸ recording that 'Erant enim plures res episcopatus violenter tenentes, quorum potential partim ex data regi pecunia, partim ex propinquorum copia succrescens' ('there were a number of individuals holding properties of the bishopric by force, whose power was increasing, partly as a result of money given to the king, partly through the wealth of their relatives').³⁹ Hervey successfully wrests back control of these lands, and the following chapters include a collection of charters and other narrative material which indicate the challenges involved in protecting the integrity of the new see and its properties – as well as Hervey's success in securing further estates. The place of the *Libellus Æthelwoldi* within this context raises interesting questions. Simon Keynes comments on the function of the *Libellus*, commissioned by Hervey within this tense and divided twelfth-century context, as 'essentially an early manifestation of the house chronicle' which serves to construct a unifying history and identity for Ely.⁴⁰ Keynes goes on to argue that:

³⁷ Nigel Ramsay, 'The Library and Archives 1109–1541', in *A History of Ely Cathedral*, ed. Peter Meadows and Nigel Ramsay (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 157–68, p. 157.

³⁸ *Liber Eliensis*, ed. Blake, p. 252; *Liber Eliensis*, trans. Fairweather, p. 304.

³⁹ *Liber Eliensis*, ed. Blake, p. 252; *Liber Eliensis*, trans. Fairweather, p. 304.

⁴⁰ Simon Keynes, 'Ely Abbey 672–1109', pp. 3–58, p. 7.

[The *Libellus*] has no obvious connection with contentious matters such as the division of the Abbey's lands between the monks and the bishop, and seems symbolic of their *common* interests.⁴¹

Keynes is clearly right that the *Libellus* constructs a shared history and heritage for the monastic and episcopal communities at Ely. Yet it is also possible that the text might have generated more uncomfortable questions for audiences in twelfth-century Ely. The *Libellus Æthelwoldi* is a text completely focused on the politics of possession – assertion, contestation, rights and usurpations. It is permeated with an awareness and anxiety about the negotiability of land-rights and the processes of claim and counter-claim. The *Libellus* might be read as a text which attempts to export and circumscribe conflict over property by locating it within the Anglo-Saxon past. Yet the text implicitly invites comparison between the tenth-century disputes which it narrates and the ongoing issues at Ely in the twelfth century. One key parallel suggested by the *Libellus*, which would have been particularly expedient for the Ely bishopric in its early struggles for authority, is that between Bishop Æthelwold and the new Bishop Hervey.

Where the *Libellus Æthelwoldi* constructs a binary opposition between the abbey, championed by Æthelwold, and the treachery and greed of the local laity, *Liber Eliensis* Book III similarly presents a picture of the new bishopric, led by Hervey, pitched against the hostility of both secular landholders and the Ely monks. The powerful, charismatic figure of Æthelwold – and the prime agency credited to him for all Ely's acquisition as successes – forms an authorising and legitimising model for Hervey and his strategies on behalf of the new see. The Æthelwold of the *Libellus* prose may be habitually introduced with the epithet 'beatus', yet the accounts of negotiations and transactions over property reveal him to be an astute tactician and ruthless opportunist. His pursuit of the vulnerable widow Sigeflæd after Leofsige's death, for example, indicates a readiness to recognise and seize an opportunity for gain. Barbara Yorke comments that the archives of Ely, amongst those of other reformed houses 'demonstrate the way in which Æthelwold relentlessly pursued his aims though law-suits, land-transfers and purchase'.⁴² As discussed above, close analysis of the *Libellus* text reveals Æthelwold's ability to invoke and manipulate the ties and obligations of the local Ely gift economy and power networks, further demonstrating his skills as a politician.

The model of Æthelwold as powerful patron and central agent in the expansion and protection of Ely Abbey in the tenth century offers an expedient precedent for Hervey and his tactics at Ely in the early twelfth century. Book III of the *Liber Eliensis* is packed with evidence for conflict and dispute over land-rights at Ely, and the role of the new bishop in securing the interests of the see. Hervey himself is remembered as a wily diplomat, tactician and politician. Chapter 26, for example, details arrangements made by Hervey to formalise (and, of course, to limit) the extent

⁴¹ Keynes, 'Ely Abbey 672–1109', p. 7.

⁴² Barbara Yorke, 'Introduction', in *Bishop Æthelwold. His Career and Influence*, ed. Barbara Yorke (Woodbridge, 1988), pp. 1–12, p. 5.

of the monks' land-rights. Hervey's charter states that 'Ego vero ... aliquam tali de causa seditionem timens pullulare, res monachorum a rebus episcopalibus separatim ordinavi et ad ipsorum necessaria eisdem ad horam assentientibus hec subscripta illos separatim possidere permisi...' ('I, fearing the fomenting of dissension on some such ground [i.e. of the monks' needs and rights] ... have organised the affairs of the monks separately from the affairs of the bishopric, and, for their needs, with their immediate agreement, I have allowed them to possess separately the properties listed below...').⁴³ Hervey's condescending language of generosity and donation euphemises his intention to control the monastery's possessions and suppress any further ambitions. The case of Hervey's acquisition of Chatteris, narrated in Book III, Chapter 17, is another particularly notable example of the bishop's opportunistic tactics.

...monasterium sub nomine abbacie constitutum, quam diu manu regia versabatur, gravissimis angariis premebatur. Videns itaque vir discretissimus locum destructioni proximum et pauperes Dei ancillas nimium inquietari nec posse ullo modo sine meliore patrocinio locum incolere, paterna pietate ductus episcopalem sollicitudinem ad liberandam Christi familiam apposuit.⁴⁴

[T]he monastic community, nominally established as an abbey, was hard pressed by the greatest difficulties, so long as it existed under royal control. Hervey, a man of great discernment, saw that the place was close to destruction and that the poor handmaidens of God were greatly distressed and unable to live in the place without better patronage. Guided by a sense of paternal duty, he therefore brought to bear the solicitude he felt as a bishop to bring about the emancipation of the household of Christ.⁴⁵

Like Æthelwold, Hervey is quick to recognise opportunities for expansion and acquisition, and to act on these successfully. Through the precedent of Æthelwold commemorated in the *Libellus Æthelwoldi*, Hervey's tactics can be aligned, not with earthly or material ambition, but with the model of the powerful spiritual patron who champions a divine cause. The *Libellus* image of Æthelwold, then, becomes an authorising and legitimising mirror for Hervey, endorsing his policies of both retention and expansion of the bishopric's lands. The *Libellus* implicitly constructs an inheritance from bishop to bishop, with Hervey continuing Æthelwold's work as true champion of Ely and as another new founder and renovator of its spiritual life. The image of the charismatic patron constructed in the *Libellus Æthelwoldi* perhaps reveals as much about Hervey's own ambitions and self-fashioning as it does about Æthelwold and the tenth-century Benedictine Reform.

The *Libellus Æthelwoldi*, then, does important work for Hervey and the establishment of the new bishopric of Ely in the early twelfth century. The *Libellus* mis-represents or (deliberately) mis-remembers lay involvement at Ely in the late tenth century, eliding the contributions of secular landholders to the endowment of

⁴³ *Liber Eliensis*, ed. Blake, p. 262; *Liber Eliensis*, trans. Fairweather, p. 315.

⁴⁴ *Liber Eliensis*, ed. Blake, p. 257.

⁴⁵ *Liber Eliensis*, trans. Fairweather, p. 309.

the abbey and instead focusing on the central figure of Æthelwold as a charismatic, powerful patron. The *Libellus* text consistently attaches all agency for Ely's protection and expansion to Æthelwold himself, characterising the local lay community as merely a potential threat to the abbey and its possessions. Whilst closer analysis of the text reveals Æthelwold's involvement in regional politics and his participation in networks of relationship and exchange, the dominant image projected by the *Libellus* emphasises Æthelwold's autonomy and his power to intervene on behalf of the abbey in messy local disputes. Yet beyond these strategies in the prose text, the *Libellus* employs a further technique to consolidate its image of Æthelwold as powerful patron. The Latin verses embedded within the *Libellus Æthelwoldi* make a crucial contribution to the picture of Æthelwold presented by the text. In contrast to the legal detail and involved historical accounts of the prose, the *Libellus* verses exploit panegyric and hagiographic language to create an idealised, stylised image of Æthelwold which transcends the grubby realities of land acquisition and tenth-century politics. In their very different linguistic register and focus, the poems represent an interesting disjunction and tension with the wider prose text of the *Libellus*. The verses fully elide the tough political necessities and realities of patronage, re-writing Æthelwold as a mythical and saintly figure free from the taint of earthly or material concerns. A literary analysis of the verse sections of the *Libellus Æthelwoldi*, and the wider dynamics of the text as prosimetrum, will enable us to further extend and refine our understanding of representations of power and patronage in the late Anglo-Saxon and early post-Conquest periods.

The *Libellus* verses include one poem, already discussed, on the Benedictine Reform as a 'Golden Age' (Chapter 3) and one panegyric to the site of Downham, acquired for Ely by Æthelwold in the tenth century and the location of an important episcopal palace for the new see of Ely in the twelfth century (Chapter 11).⁴⁶ The other five poems (Chapters 4, 5, 7, 9, 34) are the true 'Æthelwold poems', celebrating the achievements of Ely's patron and working to consolidate his image as a saintly figure. Most fundamentally, the poems commemorate Æthelwold's virtue and piety, as well as his protection of Ely as founder and patron. The first Æthelwold stanza in Chapter 4 sets the tone of the verses to follow.

Institor o diues, felix per secula uiues.
 Celica sumpsisti, dum tu terrena dedisti.
 Ecce tenes celum, quo nostrum dirige uelum,
 Concibes tecum, quo conregnemus in eum.

O bountiful founder, you will live honoured through the ages. You took up heavenly concerns when you gave away earthly ones. Indeed you will rule in heaven, from where may you direct our course (your fellow citizens with you) so that thereby we may rule together in eternity.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ This poem is in some ways distinct from the other verses: it is longer, more heavily classicising, and participates self-consciously in Latin pastoral panegyric traditions and conventions.

⁴⁷ *Libellus*, Chapter 4.

Like the other poems of the *Libellus*, the form here is leonine hexameters, with their characteristic bisyllabic rhyme at the middle and end of each line.⁴⁸ The *Libellus* verses vary between direct address of Æthelwold and third-person description of his achievements: here the poem speaks to Æthelwold directly as the founder ('institor') of the reformed abbey. As with all the *Libellus* verses, the style here is highly rhetorical and performative – markedly different from much of the dense, legalistic prose which surrounds it. The verses in Chapter 7 celebrate Æthelwold in similar ways, opening with the exclamation 'O quantus uir erat, quem gratia tanta replebat, / Esset ut in mundo, uiuens Christo sine mundo' ('O how great a man he was, who had been imbued with so much grace, when he was in the world, living for Christ beyond the world').⁴⁹ The verses in Chapter 9 are remarkable for their condensation of such a range of conventional hagiographic and panegyric metaphors into so few lines.

Omne felici condignum censeo dici,
 Qui seruit Christo, mundo dum uiuit in isto,
 Sicut Ædeluoldus fecit presul uenerandus.
 Ex utero matris se moribus exuit atris,
 Proposito saluo, dum matris uixit ab aluo,
 Instituit uitam diuina lege peritam.
 Composuit mores, essent totidem quasi flores,
 Excoctus digne, dum purificatur in igne,
 Purior extractus, resplenduit illius actus,
 Dumque suum cursum direxit ad ethera sursum,
 Per uite portus eternos uenit ad ortus.

I think him to be said worthy of every good fortune who serves Christ, while he lives in this world, as did the venerable Bishop Æthelwold. He laid aside evil practices from [the time of leaving] the womb of his mother, by keeping to [this] resolve, while he lived out of the womb of his mother, he established a life suffused by divine law. He acquired good habits of life [which] were like as many flowers; worthily tested, until cleansed in fire, brought forth the purer, his work shone, until he took his course to the regions above, [and] came through life's haven to the dawns of eternity.⁵⁰

These lines give a reduced *Vita* of Æthelwold from his mother's womb through life, death and into eternity. His virtuous habits are compared to flowers ('flores'), his accomplishments are described as shining ('resplenduit'), and the verses draw on

⁴⁸ See Michael Lapidge's discussion of the *Libellus* poems, and his arguments regarding their authorship by the Ely monk Gregory (Wulfstan, *Life of St Æthelwold*, pp. 82–83). Whilst a widely popular form in the twelfth century, the leonine hexameter is also an interesting choice in this instance as its internal rhyme breaks the lines rhythmically into two halves – an appropriate resonance with Old English vernacular poetry in a text which commemorates the Anglo-Saxon past. For a discussion of a twelfth-century attempt to suggest the features of Old English verse in Latin poetry, see A.G. Rigg, 'Henry of Huntingdon's Metrical Experiments', *Journal of Medieval Latin* 1 (1991), 60–72.

⁴⁹ *Libellus*, Chapter 7.

⁵⁰ *Libellus*, Chapter 9.

conventional imagery of life as a journey towards the harbour ('portus') of heaven. The brief allusions to familiar hagiographic imagery provide concise signals of Æthelwold's saintliness, with key terms and metaphors serving as recognisable markers in this very brief sketch of his holy life. Whilst the Æthelwold verses represent a very small proportion of the *Libellus Æthelwoldi* text in comparison with the prose, they form succinct points of entry into the very different discourses of panegyric and hagiography, calling up much wider and weightier associations beyond their few lines. The verses invite different ways of thinking about Æthelwold: not in terms of his career in Anglo-Saxon monastic reform, law and politics as presented by the prose text, but in more universal (or 'de-contextualised'⁵¹) terms of saintliness, virtue and spiritual patronage.

The verses also re-write the difficulties and challenges which Æthelwold encounters as patron of Ely, replacing the realities of protracted disputes and negotiations between the abbey and the local laity with a more straightforward and powerful myth of the saint's holy battle against the devil. The prose text of the *Libellus* characterises the local lay community as potentially obstructive, hostile and treacherous, yet the verses go much further and state explicitly that any opposition to the abbey's ambitions is driven by the agency of the devil. The verses in Chapter 5 set this out clearly.

Pacem sanctorum sic rumpere sepe uirorum,
 Sic solet antiquus turbare bonos inimicus.
 Sic armat mundum contra sanctos furibundum,
 Ut pars iustorum succumbat mole malorum,
 Ni domini pietas dignetur ponere metas,
 Nedum temptentur, nimium temptando grauentur.

In this way the ancient enemy is accustomed to cast good men into confusion, to destroy time and again the peace of holy men. In this way he arms the frantic world against the saints, so that the cause of the just surrenders to the might of evil men, unless the compassion of the Lord deems it worthy to put an end [to this], lest when [the just] are tempted they be too greatly oppressed in their temptation.⁵²

This verse passage forms a major stylistic and representational leap within the *Libellus Æthelwoldi*: the preceding prose text of the chapter has narrated the acquisition of land at Hatfield by Æthelwold and the abbey, involving a dispute with the ealdorman Æthelwine, the use of compensation previously paid by Wulfwine the Cook and his wife, and the inclusion of witnesses to confirm the legal validity of the contract. The case is a good example of a complex and involved dispute, which reveals Æthelwold's ability to negotiate local politics, exploit debts and obligations amongst the local community and make use of legal processes and authority. Yet the poem elides all the complexities of local politics and relationships, rejecting any questions of rights, procedures or the motivations of those involved. Instead, this dispute (and, by

⁵¹ See the discussion of Geary's comments on foundation myths above, pp. 157–58.

⁵² *Libellus*, Chapter 5.

implication, all the others recorded in the *Libellus*) is represented as a polarised battle between the saint and the devil. The ‘antiquus ... inimicus’ (‘ancient enemy’) uses the world as his instrument against the holy man, who is eventually aided by God in his triumph. Just as the (perhaps exaggerated) notion of the pervasive ‘anti-monastic reaction’ allows the *Libellus Æthelwoldi* to homogenise and dismiss all lay opposition in the main prose text, so here the conventions of hagiographic verse allow the poem to reject all those who do not support the abbey as agents of the devil. Through their poetic idiom and appropriation of hagiographic conventions, the verses in Chapter 5 are able to go far further than the prose text in their dismissal of lay claims and their elevation of Æthelwold as the instrument of God’s justice and divine will.

The verses in Chapter 5 make an important contribution to the *Libellus* image of Æthelwold as a spiritual patron who exercises power and agency authorised by God. Whilst close analysis of the *Libellus* prose reveals Æthelwold to be closely involved in local politics at Ely, the verses elevate him to the status of saintly mediator and transform disputes and opposition into an epic struggle between God and the devil. Interestingly, the *Libellus* verses insist throughout on Æthelwold’s association with heavenly and eternal concerns, rather than with earthly or material ambition. This further consolidates their image of Æthelwold as a figure whose interventions on behalf of Ely transcend – rather than participate in – local political alliances and economies. Yet the verses’ repeated emphasis on Æthelwold’s lack of concern for worldly affairs suggests an underlying anxiety which they seek to address. The verses in Chapter 4 (discussed above) foreground Æthelwold’s status as a saint and his place in eternity rather than amongst temporal concerns, remarking that ‘Celica sumpsisti, dum tu terrena dedisti’ (‘You took up heavenly concerns when you gave away earthly ones’). The internal rhyme on ‘sumpsisti’ and ‘dedisti’ reinforces this pairing of worldly rejection and spiritual acceptance. The verses in Chapter 7 observe that, while living in the world, Æthelwold was ‘uiuens Christo sine mundo’ (‘living for Christ beyond the world’). The Chapter 7 verses close with the lines:

Vir pie, sancte, bone pater, Ædeluuolde, patrone
 Inter opes secli sitiebas gaudia celi.
 Mundus uilescit, tibi dum dos celica crescit,
 Qua nos dotari felix dignare precari.

Pious man, good [and] holy father, protector, Æthelwold, among the wealth of the world you thirsted after heavenly joys. The world becomes worthless when for you the heavenly endowment increases, whereby you deign to pray, fortunate one, that we be enriched.⁵³

Here the text addresses Æthelwold as at once man, father and protector or patron, and insists on his rejection of the material world in favour of heavenly rewards. The antithesis between the earthly and the eternal is reinforced by the rhymes in the third line here: as the world’s attractions become worthless (‘uilescit’), so Æthelwold’s treasure in heaven accumulates (‘crescit’). The verses explicitly assert Æthelwold’s

⁵³ *Libellus*, Chapter 7.

rejection of earthly affairs and his attention only to eternal riches. Yet they deliberately employ the very language of wealth and endowment ('dos') which relates to the earthly establishment of Ely and its estates in the tenth century. The poem evidently aims to re-cast the material wealth accrued for Ely in terms of spiritual treasure stored up for eternity. Yet even in the last line the ambiguity persists: the plea that 'nos dotari' ('we be enriched') may suggest both heavenly enrichment, in terms of faith and virtue, and earthly enrichment, in terms of the ongoing prosperity of the abbey and its lands. The poem here asserts Æthelwold's freedom from earthly, material concerns, yet calls attention to their importance in his career as patron of Ely.

A similar tension is generated by the final Æthelwold poem in Chapter 34 of the *Libellus*. This stanza articulates the transition between Æthelwold's role as earthly patron of Ely in life to that of spiritual protector after his death, and thus also bridges the gap between Æthelwold's place in the tenth-century monastic community recorded by the *Libellus Æthelwoldi* and the twelfth-century Ely of the text's audience.

Qui dispensator, qui fidus erat operator,
 Qui cultor Christi, pater Æðeluuolde, fuisti,
 Non decus argenti, speciem non excolis auri,
 Non fodis in terris, sed nosti condere celis,
 Diuitias et opes ubi nil temptant male fures,
 Quo regnas tutus, thesauros ipse secutus,
 Quos premittebas, quos tam bene distribebas.
 Interes eternis opibus gazisque supernis,
 Pace fruens Christi, quem prudens excoluisti,
 Quo nobis certus patronus adesto misertus.

As a steward, as a faithful worker, a priest of Christ as you were Father Æthelwold, you honour no brightness of silver, no sight of gold, but you learned to build for heaven, where robbers do not wickedly attack wealth and power, from where you rule in security, following those treasures which you sent in advance, which you portioned out so well. You are among eternal riches and celestial treasures, enjoying the peace of Christ, whom you zealously served, from where you will be a sure [and] compassionate protector to us.

Once again, the verses emphasise Æthelwold's lack of concern for earthly wealth. The poem focuses on the endowments and riches which Æthelwold has built in heaven, where attacks and usurpations such as those from the laity in tenth-century Ely are unknown. The opening lines suggest Æthelwold's role as merely a custodian or protector of possessions on earth, addressing him as 'dispensator' ('steward, treasurer') and 'cultor' ('priest, one who cares for something') rather than ultimate owner. The possibility of any possible self-interest or personal advancement through the wealth acquired for Ely is thus dismissed. Once again, by asserting Æthelwold's lack of interest in earthly treasure the verses in fact call attention to his determined pursuit of worldly possessions on behalf of the abbey. Yet the image of Æthelwold constructed by this verse is of a spiritual, saintly figure, interested only in the

protection of his abbey and the pursuit of heavenly rewards, and free from any entanglement with earthly concerns.

As with any prosimetrical text, the *Libellus Æthelwoldi* raises interesting questions about the inter-relationships of verse and prose, the different varieties of appropriate content carried by different registers and what poetry can do within a text that prose cannot. The textual dynamics of the medieval prosimetrum have recently received sustained critical attention from a number of scholars, many of whom attempt the difficult process of defining the characteristics of the form. Peter Dronke's study *Verses with Prose from Petronius to Dante: the Art and Scope of the Mixed Form* seeks to identify the special features of true prosimetrical writing (as opposed to prose which includes some verse), focusing on texts 'whose verse is more than quotation or parody, incidental adornment or allusion – ones where the verse is substance rather than accident, where verse and prose have become consubstantial'.⁵⁴ Joseph Harris and Karl Reichl offer the possible definition that the prosimetrum encompasses 'two basic modes, the "narrative" mode and the "expressive" mode, assigned to two forms of verbal utterance, the verse form and the prosaic form, respectively'.⁵⁵ In many prosimetrical texts, verse occurs at moments of heightened emotion or to mark significant narrative moments, providing an alternative idiom which requires the reader to pause within the surrounding prose narrative. Renée Trilling has commented that this proximity of idioms is what attracts critical interest, both in modern scholarship and in the medieval period itself, 'offering a rare opportunity to observe the differences in how prose and verse function in the same environment, where the formal contrast between verse and prose is highlighted by their juxtaposition'.⁵⁶

Among discussions of prosimetrical forms in Anglo-Saxon texts, both Trilling and Victoria B. Jordan have recently called attention to the uses of poetry and prose to sustain parallel or alternative discourses within single texts. Trilling has examined the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle as a prosimetrical text, exploring how 'the use of poetry works both formally and rhetorically ... to underscore moments of high emotional investment in praise songs and death laments, as well as providing the author with an alternative voice or voices in which to express apostrophes and commentary on events'.⁵⁷ Perhaps most pertinent to this discussion of the depiction of Æthelwold in

⁵⁴ Peter Dronke, *Verses with Prose from Petronius to Dante: the Art and Scope of the Mixed Form* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1994), p. 2. For an overview of the Latin prosimetrical tradition, see Bernhard Pabst, *Prosimetrum: Tradition und Wandel Einer Literaturform Zwischen Spätantike und Spätmittelalter* (Cologne, 1994).

⁵⁵ Joseph Harris and Karl Reichl, 'Introduction', in their *Prosimetrum: Crosscultural Perspectives on Narrative in Verse and Prose* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 1–16, p. 4. They comment elsewhere on the potential difficulties of distinguishing between verse and prose in some texts, citing the examples of Ælfric's rhythmical prose, or the instances of poetic writing in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (pp. 8–10).

⁵⁶ Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, pp. 182–83.

⁵⁷ Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, p. 181. This forms part of her wider discussion of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle as a prosimetrum (pp. 179–86); however, the text would not be regarded by all scholars as truly prosimetrical, as verse occurs only sporadically and is not fully integrated with the main prose text. See for example the definition by Peter Dronke, cited above.

the *Libellus Æthelwoldi*, Victoria B. Jordan has offered an analysis of the representation of Edward the Confessor in the mid-eleventh-century *Vita Ædwardi Regis*.⁵⁸ A sense of the particular stylistic and structural qualities of the prosimetrum is fundamental to her reading, which argues that the form is part of a deliberate strategy employed by the author. She suggests that:

Instead of viewing the *prosimetrum* form as inherently ambiguous and, therefore, unsuitable for either straight historical narrative or hagiographical panegyric, we must begin to understand and appreciate how the author employs that formal ambivalence to create a text which is at once historical and hagiographical, terrestrial and heavenly. Indeed, the *prosimetrum*'s mingling of two potentially discordant forms of discourse – poetry and prose – reflects the twin thematic strains that underlie the entire work. The text's structure, with its two distinct, yet intertwined types of discourse, emerges as the reflection, on a formal level, of the double thematic project that situates the historical and terrestrial reign of Edward the Confessor within the holy and heavenly sphere.⁵⁹

The portrayal of Edward the Confessor in the *Vita Ædwardi* forms an interesting parallel with the representation of Æthelwold in the Ely *Libellus* as at once saint and politician, man of God and pragmatic participant in earthly transactions of power and property. Jordan's analysis helps to clarify the ideological and political functions of both verse and prose operating within a single text.

Yet the readings of Anglo-Saxon texts offered by Jordan and Trilling, I would suggest, minimise the ambivalence and tension generated by the mixed form of the prosimetrum. Jordan comments that, in the *Vita Ædwardi*, the 'essential yet paradoxical relationship between the distinct discourses of the *prosimetrum* defines and circumscribes the terrestrial and heavenly messages conveyed by the text'.⁶⁰ Similarly, Trilling argues that, in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, 'the mixed form ... creates an opportunity for a clearly delineated, multi-voiced narrative within a single text'.⁶¹ Both Jordan and Trilling regard their Anglo-Saxon prosimetrical sources in terms of the clear 'circumscription' and 'delineation' of different modes and messages, suggesting that the mixed prose and verse form allows different aspects of history, or of a single historical figure, to be distinguished and neatly compartmentalised. Yet this idea that a narrative can operate unproblematically 'on two planes' seems questionable.⁶² In many cases within the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, for example, such clear differentiation between verse and prose is itself difficult and subjective.⁶³ Instead, in Anglo-Saxon examples, verse and prose sustain distinct and sometimes conflicting idioms and ways of seeing, generating tensions and even contradictions which must be negotiated by the reader. In the *Libellus Æthelwoldi*, it

⁵⁸ For a detailed discussion of this text, see Chapter 4 in this volume.

⁵⁹ Jordan, 'Chronology and Discourse in the *Vita Ædwardi Regis*', p. 125.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

⁶¹ Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, p. 184.

⁶² For the phrase, see Jordan, 'Chronology and Discourse in the *Vita Ædwardi Regis*', p. 138.

⁶³ See the discussion of the poetic passages within the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle in Chapter 2 of this study.

is possible to draw clear stylistic contrasts between the prose and verse portions of the text, and to identify different representations of Æthelwold characteristic of each idiom. The prosimetrical form sustains a double way of perceiving Æthelwold, enabling the text to present a dual model of patronage as simultaneously both saintly and transcendent, and pragmatic and politically-engaged, yet it also implicitly calls attention to the disjunctions and incongruities between these two images.

The prose text of the *Libellus Æthelwoldi* has a clear function in commemorating the land acquisitions achieved by Æthelwold, but also serves as a legal catalogue of the abbey's possessions (as well as its continuing claims to some lands no longer held in the twelfth century).⁶⁴ The *Libellus* prose presents sustained narrative accounts of land transfers and agreements, employing formulaic legalistic language to underpin the validity of gifts and purchases.⁶⁵ The majority of speech within the prose sections is reported, but even where direct speech is included it appears to be a replication of written legal conventions rather than an attempt to capture the dynamics of oral communication.⁶⁶ Very occasionally, the prose of the *Libellus* is interrupted by a more performative rhetorical passage. In Chapter 14 the text comments on further trouble from local secular landholders with the exclamations:

O nefas secli! o ambitio mundi! que nunquam cessat ecclesiasticis rebus inhiare, inhiando dilacerare et dilacerando minuire. Videte quam iniquum commercium.

O abomination of the world! O temporal ambition! It never ceases to hunger after the possessions of the Church, in hungering to devour them, and in devouring them to lessen them. See what unjust commerce!⁶⁷

However, the use of this idiom within the main prose text is very rare. The *Libellus* verses, on the other hand, consistently employ performative rhetorical devices such as apostrophe as well as rhythm and rhyme in their commemorations of Æthelwold. Yet apart from the obvious stylistic differences between prose and verse, the two different aspects of the *Libellus* text clearly promote different images of Æthelwold and situate him within different historical and cultural contexts. The prose text works hard to construct an image of Æthelwold as a charismatic, powerful patron ready to intervene in local disputes and negotiations on behalf of the abbey. Yet the prose also records the circumstances of these negotiations and their resolutions, inevitably associating

⁶⁴ For example, the reference to lands at Horningsea and Gransden in Chapters 56 and 57.

⁶⁵ For example, in Chapter 29: 'Fuit itaque laudatum ac concessum sic ex utraque parte et Ordelmus erat utrimque testis ac fideiussor huius emptionis' ('Thereupon it was pronounced and settled on each side and Ordhelm was accordingly witness and warrantor of this purchase for both parties').

⁶⁶ For example, Oslac's speech in Chapter 29: 'Non noui', inquit, 'me dedisse ei quod dicis, sed scio bene, quod debeo illi .xl. aureos, et uolo ac annuo ut nostri amici, qui hic sunt, uideant et appetrent .xl. acras quas de me habetis et unum predium et terciam partem sylue apud Dullingeham et, secundum quod appetiauerint, hec pro tanto accipite reddamque quod restabit' ('I do not recognise that I gave him what you say, but I know well that I owe him forty mancuses and I desire and agree that our friends who are here look over and assess the forty acres which you have from me and the farm and the third part of the wood at Dullingham. Then, according to their valuation, accept these for this amount, and I will pay what remains').

⁶⁷ *Libellus*, Chapter 14.

Æthelwold with the politics, alliances and business of the Ely region in the late tenth century. Whilst the prose explicitly attributes all agency and credit for the patronage and protection of Ely to Æthelwold himself, closer analysis reveals the intrinsic involvement and positive contribution of the local lay community. Æthelwold is in fact a figure ready and able to participate in local networks and economies to secure properties for the abbey. Stylistically, the prose text is unable to avoid writing Æthelwold into this sphere of legal practice and secular business – he becomes a figure within a conventional legal discourse. The verses, however, are able to go much further in achieving the image of Æthelwold as a powerful spiritual patron. They dismiss the complexities of local politics, assert Æthelwold's rejection of earthly affairs, and re-situate him within a context of hagiographic and panegyric – rather than legalistic or historical – literature. The *Libellus* thus presents intriguing disjunctions and tensions between its prose and verse elements. Whilst the prose offers one version of Æthelwold as a determined tactician and politician, ruthlessly pursuing the abbey's interests, the verse presents him as an idealised, stylised, de-contextualised figure, framed only in terms of his saintliness and power as a spiritual protector.⁶⁸ This dual image of Æthelwold, whilst generating tensions and incongruities within the *Libellus Æthelwoldi*, clearly offers a highly expedient model for Bishop Hervey, commissioning the *Libellus* at Ely in the early twelfth century. The bivalent Æthelwold constructed in the *Libellus Æthelwoldi* provides a legitimising precedent for Hervey's ruthless political manoeuvrings on behalf of the new Ely bishopric, and also presents a compelling image of the charismatic, saintly patron figure whose agency and authority are granted by God.⁶⁹ These two models of patronage remain in tension with each other, yet the prosimetrical form of the *Libellus* suspends them both simultaneously within the text.

The *Libellus Æthelwoldi* raises a range of questions relating to Anglo-Saxon practices of power, and their recollection and commemoration in a later medieval period. The *Libellus* also reveals the sophistication with which complex issues of power, patronage, and authority can be negotiated – as well as disguised and deflected – within a seemingly straightforward medieval historiographical text. The *Libellus* presents interpretative challenges due to its dual context: its accounts of

⁶⁸ The tensions and paradoxical relationships between verse and prose content in the *Libellus* reflect a central issue identified by Alexander Rumble in relation to the tenth-century Benedictine reform. 'It was a lasting paradox that, although the New Minster Refoundation Charter and other documents urged the monks and nuns to shun lay people and their behaviour, they could not in fact follow the exclusive monastic life to which they aspired without the patronage, protection and sympathy of both those in authority and the general population living around their monasteries.' Rumble, 'The Laity and the Monastic Reform', p. 251. See also Alexander R. Rumble, *Property and Piety in Early Medieval Winchester: Documents Relating to the Topography of the Anglo-Saxon and Norman City and its Minsters* (Oxford, 2003), p. 33.

⁶⁹ If Michael Lapidge's identification of the *Libellus* author as 'Gregorius Eliensis monachus' is correct, then the service of an Ely monk in the production of this text for the new Ely bishop raises further interesting questions regarding the politics of patronage and the monastic author's negotiation of local loyalties, allegiances and politics. It may suggest divergent uses of the past – as well as of the *Libellus* text itself – with 'Gregorius' celebrating the founder of his Benedictine Abbey and Hervey appropriating the same historical narrative to advance the interests of his bishopric.

tenth-century history and the career of Æthelwold are refracted through the politics of twelfth-century Ely and Hervey's need to construct a legitimising past for the new see and its claims to territory.⁷⁰ The *Libellus* deals with questions of land ownership, dispute and usurpation which present acutely relevant parallels for the tensions and negotiations between the new bishopric and the monastic community at Ely in the early twelfth century. The *Libellus* offers Hervey the model of a powerful, charismatic patron who acts with autonomy and agency granted by God. Æthelwold himself is the legitimising mirror through which Hervey gains authority and prestige as the bishop and *renovator* of Ely and defender of the rights of the new see. In its attempts to emphasise the power and authority of Æthelwold, the *Libellus* misrepresents and disguises the significant contribution of the local laity to the endowment and support of the reformed abbey at Ely in the tenth century. In order to magnify Æthelwold's role as sole champion, the local secular community is repeatedly characterised as hostile, changeable or obstructive. The notion of the 'anti-monastic reaction' serves a useful purpose within the text in homogenising and dismissing all claims against the abbey. Yet closer analysis of the text suggests that its polarised representation of the charismatic patron Æthelwold versus the squabbling local laity elides the co-operation and collaboration between abbey, patron and local secular community. Æthelwold in fact participates readily in local networks of power and economies of relationship and exchange, recognising opportunities, manipulating obligations and negotiating gifts and purchases. The clearest distinction between the two models of Æthelwold – as a spiritual patron free from earthly ties and as a powerful politician acting on behalf of Ely – can perhaps be seen in the disjunctions and tensions between the *Libellus* prose and verse sections and their different registers and emphases. The prosimetrical form of the *Libellus* allows both of these – essentially conflicting – models of power and patronage to co-exist within the text, and thus they both offer Hervey precedents for the fashioning of his identity and legitimisation of his methods as bishop. A literary analysis of the text, focusing on its formal structures and strategies, casts new light on the multivalent ways in which Æthelwold is remembered and modelled for twelfth-century audiences. The *Libellus Æthelwoldi* shows how the memory of Anglo-Saxon patronage could still do important political work in twelfth-century England. It also demonstrates, once again, how different modes of power – built on hierarchical authority as well as economies of interdependence – could be deployed alongside and against each other within a single text.

⁷⁰ The *Libellus* justifies Hervey's claims not by exact correspondence with the bishopric's owned / contested lands, but rather by endorsing, through the model of Æthelwold, his methods for their protection and expansion.

Afterword

This short concluding section will offer some reflections on themes and issues which have emerged across the chapters, and suggestions for ways in which the individual case studies within the book have developed or nuanced our understanding of power as imagined and shaped in late Anglo-Saxon texts. As signalled in the Introduction, the Anglo-Saxon texts explored here present, in their own differing ways, a dual model of power. On the one hand, the sources construct strict systems of hierarchical order and the vertical operation of power, yet they also show individuals to be enmeshed in economies of mutual obligation, interdependence and reciprocity. The doubleness of this way of understanding and representing power often generates tensions and contradictions, as different configurations of relationship and authority overlap, co-exist or shift within texts. Sometimes, the fluidity and ambiguity in representations of relationships suggests a deliberate deflection or evasion of questions of absolute hierarchy, or even the possibility of rhetorical strategies specifically deployed to disguise and euphemise the operation of power. Crucially, these texts also create sites in which authors, patrons and audiences can meet and enact, through particular dynamics of textual production and reception, the exchanges and reciprocities which characterise the broader workings of social and cultural power, authority and obligation.

This study has offered some new possibilities for thinking about the ways in which ideas of power are written into late Anglo-Saxon texts. My focus throughout the chapters has been on representational strategies, the uses of texts to promote particular ideologies or agendas within specific contexts, and their imaginative experimentation with varying configurations of identities, roles and relationships. But is it possible to build on this textual analysis to extend our understanding of the actual practice and exercise of power in late Anglo-Saxon society? Relationships between representation and reality are always complex and it is problematic to make easy assumptions about how textual images and ideas might correspond with actual social practice.¹ These interpretative challenges are compounded by the fact that

¹ Clare A. Lees and Gillian R. Overing draw a very clear distinction between the spheres of 'representation' and 'referentiality' in the Introduction to their *Double Agents. Women and Clerical*

many of the Anglo-Saxon texts examined over the course of this study explore aspects of power by symbolic, oblique or coded means. The historical operation of power in Anglo-Saxon society remains a subject for continuing investigation by historians: my own emphasis has been to recover ways in which questions of power and inter-relationship are represented and negotiated in texts.

However, this study has raised some issues which, for me, intersect with the present approaches of historians to late Anglo-Saxon society and culture. The double way of seeing power and inter-relationship suggested by the literary texts resonates interestingly with conversations in current historiography as identified, for example, by Stephen Baxter. As discussed in the Introduction to this book, Baxter characterises two distinct approaches within current scholarship on late Anglo-Saxon society: one which emphasises highly centralised structures of power, built on systems of hierarchy and vertical concatenation; and the other which perceives power as transacted and negotiated at more local levels through circuits or economies of inter-dependence and mutual obligation.² Baxter attempts to reconcile these two approaches rather than to privilege one, seeking to acknowledge, to an extent, the dual operations of power and concurrent systems of configuring social relationships and obligations in late Anglo-Saxon England. Literary texts – and the process of textual analysis – can go further in embracing this duality (or even multiplicity) within systems and ideologies of power. Texts can simultaneously sustain and suspend a variety of ways of envisioning power and social relationship. They do not necessarily need to reconcile potentially contradictory models or images, but instead can admit and even foreground possible ambivalences and tensions, and experiment with a range of patterns and models. I would suggest that this is more than simply an aesthetic trick or rhetorical illusion, but fundamental to the ways of seeing and understanding reflected in these late Anglo-Saxon texts. From the sources examined in this study, it seems that simultaneities, dualities and doubleness are crucial to Anglo-Saxon ways of envisioning power, resisting either closure into one over-ruling model, or reconciliation into a neat, integrated, unified vision.

Most of all, what this study has shown is the special capacity of texts to sustain these ambivalences and double ways of seeing, in ways beyond those possible in current historiography or indeed, it seems reasonable to argue, in the actual practice of power in late Anglo-Saxon England. The texts create spaces in which ideas of power, hierarchy and economy can play freely and suggestively. They explore and experiment with the various ways in which power can be formulated when identities and relationships do not have to be reduced to one single model or meaning, but can be suspended as dual, multivalent or ambiguous. Indeed, beyond a specific analysis of power and patronage in early medieval England, this book calls attention to the insistent presence of doubleness or simultaneity as an aesthetic and cognitive mode

Culture in Anglo-Saxon England. For a (largely) optimistic discussion of the ways in which literary and historical studies can be mutually illuminating, see Stock, *Listening for the Text*, esp. pp. 16–29.

² See Baxter, *The Earls of Mercia*, esp. pp. 10–13, and the discussion in the Introduction to this book.

across a wide range of Anglo-Saxon texts, which deserves further investigation and discussion. Through close analysis of texts and their representational strategies, this book has advanced a new approach to ideologies and depictions of power in Anglo-Saxon England, emphasising ambivalence, fluidity and duality. These readings open the way for fresh discussions about the operation of power in early medieval society and for interdisciplinary conversation about the role texts might play in the production, performance and re-negotiation of both cultural ideals and political practice.

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